



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council

Architectural Design Statement

For

**Construction of 60no. Social Housing units and all associated site
development works at Lifford Common, Lifford Co. Donegal.**

Project Ref HCS 0322



Prepared by:

Housing Capital

Three Rivers Centre, Lifford, Co Donegal

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

The Architectural Design Statement, prepared by Donegal County Council, supports the Part 8 application for the development of 60no. Social Housing Units and all associated site developments works at Lifford Common, Lifford, Co. Donegal. This report addressed the criteria as set out in the Urban Design Manual, a best practice guide, 2009 companion document to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009.

1.2 Outline Description of Brief

The project brief is to deliver a social housing development of high-quality residential accommodation in the form of houses and apartments across the site. The residential development forms part of an overall development of lands owned at Lifford Common by Donegal County Council. The total site provided for social housing is 2.12 hectares. A proposed masterplan for the development of the overall site, has been prepared by the Council's Economic Development Section and has been included with the Part 8 drawings for this application. (Refer to *Figure 01* below)

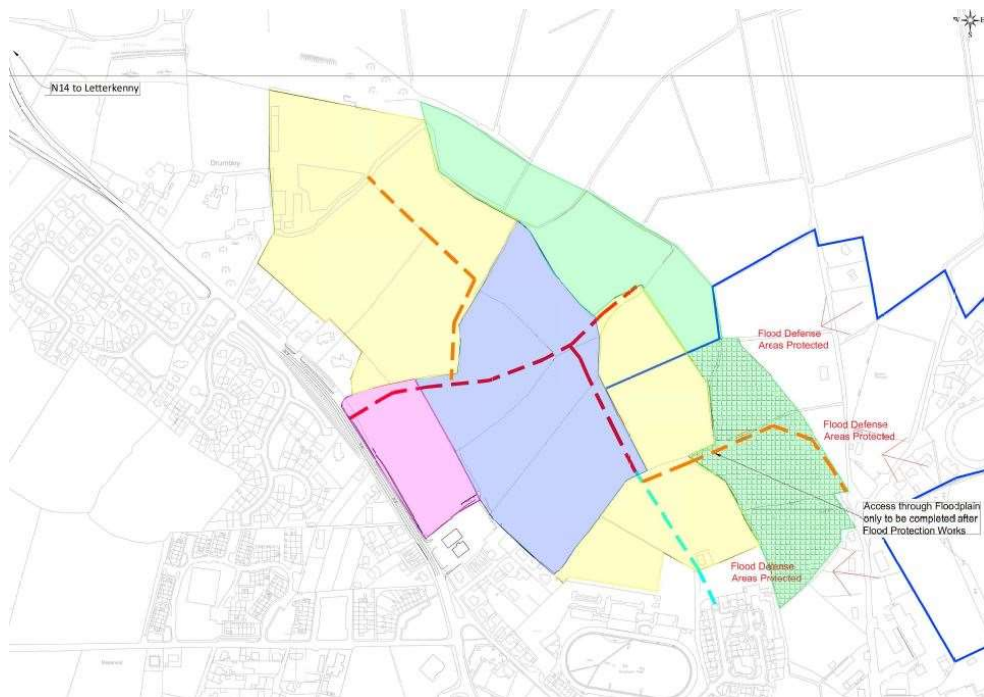


Figure 01. Extract of Masterplan submitted with application.

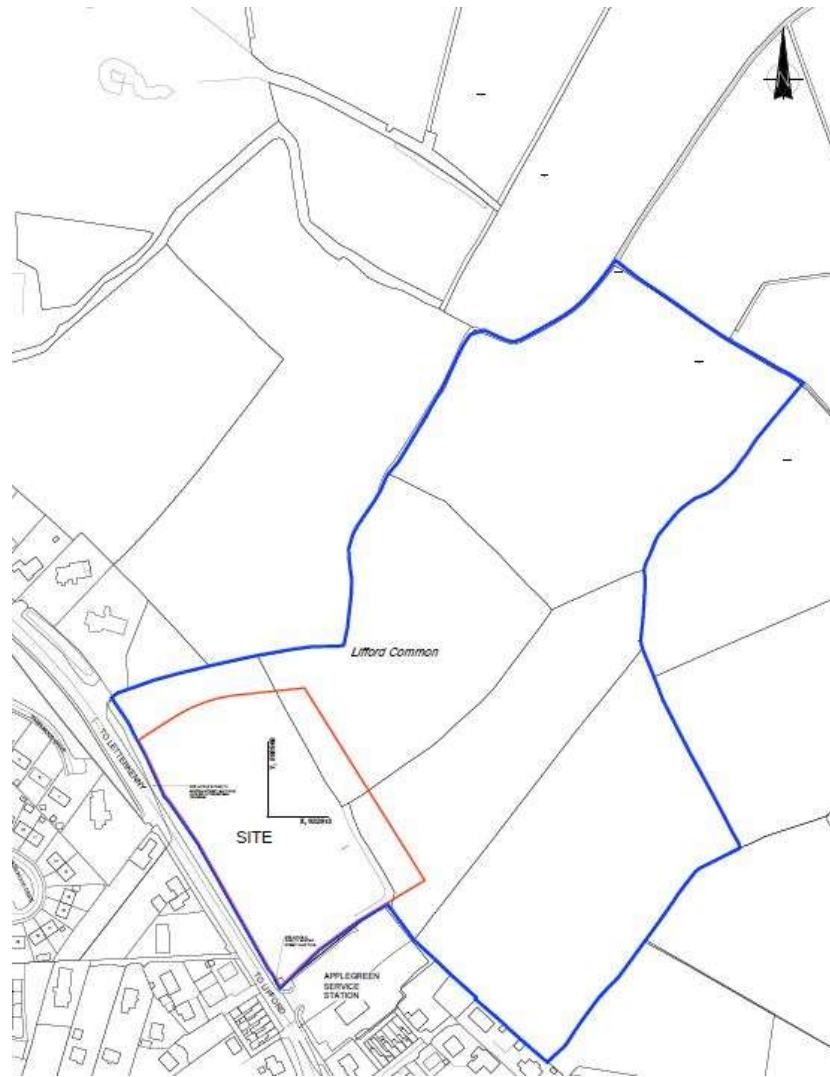


Figure 02. *Extract of Site Location Plan.*

1.3 Proposal Accommodation and Standards

The proposal provides new two-story, houses and apartments, comprising of 40no. houses and 20no. apartments. A breakdown of the types is provided in the table below:

Schedule of Accommodation (based on current Housing Need)		
1-Bedroom Apartment	4	7%
2-Bedroom Apartment	16	27%
2-Bedroom House	20	33%
3-Bedroom House	17	28%
4-Bedroom House	3	5%
Total	60	

Table 01. *Schedule of Accommodation.*

The proposed scheme has been developed having regard to the following policy and guidance documents:

- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities 2007
- Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide 2009
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban areas (Cities, Towns & Villages) 2009 - Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- Sustainable Urban Housing - Design Standards for New Apartments 2020, Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)
- County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 (CDP)

2. Site Assessment

2.1 Location

The site is a greenfield site is located along the N14 Lifford to Letterkenny Road. It is approximately 600m from Lifford town centre. The site is surrounded by residential developments to the west and north. The area is well served with schools, childcare facilities, shops, medical centres, a hospital and a Post Office, all located nearby. The nearest shop and petrol station is located directly to the south of the site. The site is also located on the main N14 Letterkenny to Lifford National Primary Road, with existing bus stops nearby.

2.2 Planning Context

The site is undeveloped. As noted in Section 1.2 above, the Council propose to develop their overall landbank at Lifford Common. The site is located within the settlement framework boundary for Lifford (Refer to *Figure 03. Map 15.17 – County Donegal Development Plan 2018 - 2024*).

Zoning

It is designated as a layer 2B Town under the current County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 (as varied) and forms part of a greater landholding zoned as ‘Opportunity Site’.

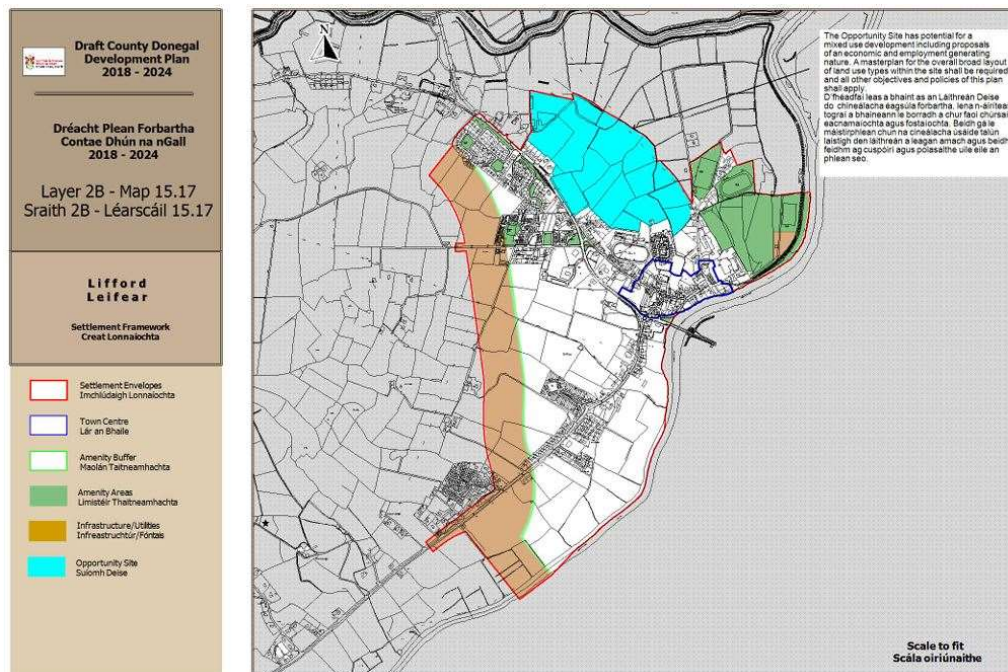


Figure 03. Map 15.17 – County Donegal Development Plan 2018 - 2024

Density

The proposed development is 33 Units of the overall developable area of the site. The site at Lifford is considered an appropriate location for this density based on the following:

- The location of the site and its convenience and proximity to Lifford town centre.
- The site is within walking distance to public transport facilities which are strategically well placed along the corridor of the national primary road N14, which provides easy accessibility to other key centres including Letterkenny, Ballybofey and Strabane.
- The availability of a wide range of facilities and amenities – recreation, educational, commercial, retail within walking distance of the site.
- The development is an efficient use of land and aims to meet anticipated population growth for Lifford and in general, the social housing needs.

Public Open Space

Provision has been made for 15% Public Open Space as required as a minimum.

Parking

In accordance with the County Donegal Development Plan the minimum requirement for car parking spaces is 89no. These have been provided within the overall development. This includes the provision of 4no. Accessible Parking spaces.

Roads and Transport

A new link road into the land at Lifford Common from the N14, will be provided as part of the initial development of the Council's land, granted planning under An Bord Pleanala Case no. 313755-22.

An access road into the housing development will be provided to the north of the site, which will connect in to the new link road. The access road and roads within the development have been designed in consultation with Road Design and in compliance with DMURS. A Road Safety Audit will be carried out on the proposal and the outcomes will be incorporated into the detailed design of the scheme. The design incorporates traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossing points throughout the development.

Archaeology

An archaeological assessment of the lands at Lifford Common have been carried out. The site is to the northwest of the historic town of Lifford. The site and its immediate surrounds do not contain any recorded archaeological remains. A walk over archaeological survey of the area was undertaken. This did not identify any features indicative of sub surface archaeological remains. The site is within agricultural land close to a 17th century town, archaeological testing has been recommended and will be carried out on site in prior to development.

2.3 Site Description and Characteristics

As outlined in Section 1.2 above, the site is 2.12 Hectares. The site for housing is bound by private detached dwellings to the north, a petrol station to the south, greenfield lands owned and currently being developed by Donegal County Council, to the east and the N14, National Primary road to the west. Adjacent to the N14 are a number of residential developments, including Clonleigh Park and a number of privately owned dwellings.

The site boundary along the N14 is defined by trees and a low level rendered block wall, which includes an agricultural gate. The boundary to the north will be redefined with the construction of the new link road into the lands at Lifford Common. To the south of the site the boundary is defined by a timber fence. A hedge and trees are located in the eastern corner of the site.

The site is relatively flat and at a lower level than the adjoining National Road, except at the north west corner where the site is slopes steeply upwards.

2.4 Site Constraints

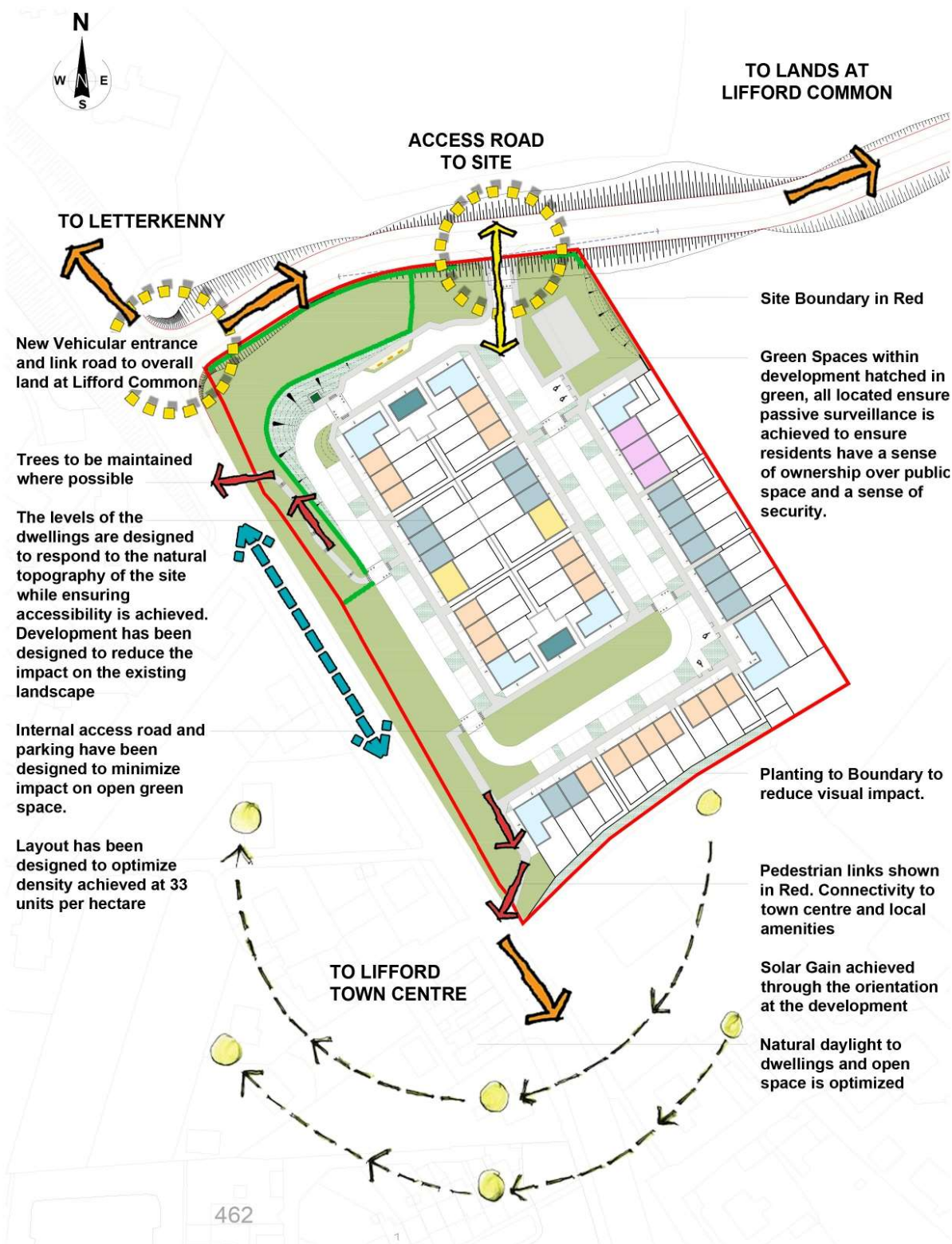
Topography – In order to avoid excessive excavation in the north west corner of the site, the layout has been designed to locate the houses and apartments centrally within the site and along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site.

A green space to the west of the development will allow for a gradual slope between the new development and the existing boundary to the National road. Existing trees to this boundary are to be maintained where possible / replaced.

The play area to the east of the entrance will be located in a natural dip in the site, to avoid requirement for fill on site.

Maintenance of boundaries– The rear gardens to the new houses and apartments to the south of the site have been set back to allow for access for future maintenance.

2.5 Site Analysis



3. Development Strategy

The vision for the development is to provide a high-quality residential community that responds to the existing built environment, but that has its own character. Lifford was an important town historically and the development has been designed to be sympathetic to the existing context. The site is appropriate for a residential development of this scale and is well situated to allow for connectivity to the town centre and local amenities, as well as future linkages to new developments, which are planned for the rest of the Council owned land adjoining the site. The development has been designed to provide sustainable, well designed, low energy, low maintenance social homes, which will be set within a high quality landscaped public realm, with well designed landscaped open green space.

3.1 Developed Proposal

The presented layout will deliver 60 units on the site. A full breakdown of the unit types and mix is as described above in Section 1.3. The scheme has been designed to achieve 33 units per hectares, which has been determined to be optimum for the site, taking into consideration the existing topography, surrounding properties and context, existing landscape and opportunities for connections and linkages to and from the site.

The proposal is in line with the requirements of DMURS. Traffic calming measures along with pedestrian crossing points are proposed and have been introduced to prioritize pedestrian accessibility throughout the development. The internal access roads within the site have been minimized to reduce the impact on the open green space provided for the residents.

All parking has been provided on-street and located to ensure that it is overlooked by residents. Parking is divided into smaller groups and separated by trees to reduce the visual impact within the development.

Access and Connectivity – The site is accessed via the new link road to the north, to be constructed as part of the initial development of the overall lands, with access to all dwellings and parking provided via the internal access road. Permeability through the site will be achieved via pedestrian links to the west and south west of the site and to the north via the vehicular entrance.

Public Open Space – The total open space provision is 15% of the net developable area of the site, in accordance with the County Donegal Development Plan and includes hard surfaces for play areas, which are accessible. The green spaces on site have been located

to achieve maximum natural daylight and are overlooked by the new dwellings to ensure that passive surveillance is achieved. This will also provide the residents with a sense of security and ownership of the public realm.

Landscape strategy – The position of the open space has been carefully considered within the overall development. The locations of footpaths and pedestrian access to the site, play areas and hedges and planting have been designed to ensure the integration of the development into the existing context and landscape.

Boundary treatment – The boundary to the south of the development, which adjoins a petrol station, will be fenced for security to the rear gardens of the property and planted to provide screening. The existing rendered block wall to the west of the site will be maintained/ repaired and replaced where necessary. A new boundary will be formed with the construction of the new link road off the N14 and the portion of the site, which slopes upwards to the north will be planted. The boundary to the east of the site will be constructed with concrete post and panel fencing to provide privacy and security the rear gardens of the dwellings.

3.2 Inclusivity

All houses are designed to be in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations and have level access to front entrances. The overall development has been designed in accordance with the Urban Design Manual. 33% of the dwellings have been designed to be 'UD' - Universally Designed. The development has been designed in line with the 'Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland'. Footpath gradients are gently sloped at no greater than 1:21.

The public open spaces have been designed to accommodate flexible recreational activities for social interaction and active play as well as quiet, calming accessible places which are inclusive for all ages and abilities. Pedestrian priority crossing points are provided into the public spaces.

3.3 Variety

The mix of units provided to meet the housing need consists of 1,2,3 and 4 bedroom houses and apartments to cater for a variety of people and households. This includes 1 bedroom and 2 bedroom units at ground and first floor which are designed to be UD.

A variety of streetscapes are achieved within the development through the careful consideration of the orientation of the central block of dwellings and those which align the eastern and southern boundary. The character of the development is also enhanced by the positioning of the green spaces and landscaping relative to the dwellings.

3.4 Efficiency and Density

The layout of the development responds to the topography of the site and the existing levels to ensure that the impact on the existing landscape is minimized. The central block of units allows for efficiency as well as optimizing density, as does the construction of two storey apartment blocks within the overall development. The dwellings are located in concentrated areas, where the site is relatively flat, minimizing the requirement for cut and fill across the site.

The internal road is a single loop to provide access to all parking and dwellings, eliminating the requirement for turning heads and additional access roads. The visual impact will be reduced with the planting of trees at appropriate locations to separate the amount of hard surfaces within the development.

3.5 Distinctiveness

The layout is defined by the green spaces across the site, which will provide a natural buffer to the busy adjoining National Road and to the new link road to the north. The dwellings have been orientated to align both roads to provide active street frontages to the site. The natural slope to the north of the site will be planted to enhance the views from the houses, as well as providing additional green space and reduce the visual impact of the development. The height will provide distinct views across Lifford Common. The layout has been designed to take advantage of the orientation of the site and to maximize natural daylight to the public spaces and dwellings while optimizing solar gains.

3.6 Layout

The layout ensures that the new streets and public realm within the development are designed as places where people are prioritized over vehicles.

The following traffic calming measures will have been included in the design to ensure that pedestrian priority is achieved:

- Adequate access arrangement for maneuvering has been provided. A clear unobstructed visibility splay of 49m has been provided at the entrance junction to the development based on 50 km/h design speed along the new recreational facility road in accordance with Table 4 Appendix 3 of the County Development Plan 2018 -2024.
- Signs, road markings, surface texture or other appropriate measures will be used to manage vehicle flow and speeds.

- The layout of the development and an anticipated speed limit of 30km/h along with the inclusion of 6no. raised tables with uncontrolled pedestrian crossings should be conducive to ensure effective traffic control and calming measures along with the provision of a safe footpaths for pedestrian users and cyclists.

The layout creates active street frontage on corner sites, with side entrances and windows on exposed gables. Good active frontage has been provided to streets and the open spaces to enhance activity and reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour.

3.7 Public Realm

The public open spaces have been provided throughout the site, to ensure that they are easily accessible to all residents. They are overlooked by dwellings and in close proximity to dwelling to allowing for enhanced surveillance and a greater sense of security. Children's play opportunities and exercise opportunities for all are provided. The public spaces are designed to be inclusive. Tree planting will enhance the environment and make it more attractive and amenable to the public.

3.7 Adaptability

There are a variety of different dwelling types and apartments within the development. All dwellings are universally accessible and will provide the necessary access and sanitary facilities to deal with life changes from young families with children to older people with possible disabilities.

Early consideration has been given to the impact the proposed development will have on the environment and long-term sustainability and to maximise passive and active technologies to comply with NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Building) requirements and support the reduction of both Co2 emissions and fossil fuel energy.

Our approach is to maximise passive solar gain, build airtight dwellings with adequate ventilation and the use of renewable energy sources where practicable.

In turn, lower costs are expected for residents in terms of heating charges due to efficiencies which can be accrued over a period. This will assist and support affordable living.

A renewable energy system will provide a greener alternative compared with traditional systems such as boilers and deliver long term savings throughout the life cost of the buildings while providing a cleaner and more sustainable source of heat.

The renewable energy system will be determined having regard to such factors as efficiency, affordability, and environmental impact. For space and water heating this may result in the use of air source heat pumps. A feasibility assessment and a comparative analysis of various systems will be carried out to fully ascertain the most appropriate system for the development.

3.8 Privacy and Amenity

The proposed development is designed to meet the standards as set out in the County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024, in respect of private open space in the form of rear gardens and balconies and to comply with the requirements of the Department of Housing. All houses will be provided with private gardens to the rear of each dwelling with walls or fencing to the boundaries to ensure that privacy and security is maintained. Distances between windows to the rear of properties will be maintained to avoid views into homes.

3.8 Parking

Provision has been made for 89no. off-curtilage parking spaces in total with adequate provision of 4no. accessible parking spaces for people with mobility issues and disabilities.

Car parking provision is considered appropriate having regard to the following:

- The location of the site and its convenience and proximity to Lifford town centre.
- The site is in walking distance to public transport facilities.
- Availability of a wide range of facilities and amenities within walking distance of the site.

Particular care will be given to ensure that off-curtilage parking spaces are landscaped and detailed through greening and planting intermittently across the development.

3.9 Detailed Design

The proposed landscaping and materials, scale and form of the proposed development have all been designed to enhance the existing built environment. The positioning of the landscapes green spaces relative to the dwellings facilities connectivity and linkages within the overall development.

The materials have been selected to complement and enhance the existing surrounding character and context.

The dwellings will be constructed with a mix of rendered walls, blue/black slate to the pitched roofs and will incorporate brick at the entrances, which are set back from the fronts of the dwellings, providing a distinctive character and individuality to the overall development. This change of material at the entrances will also provide a sense of hierarchy within the site and will reduce the visual impact of the overall blocks by defining individual dwelling entrances.

The design of the dwellings and materials selected will also ensure that future maintenance of the properties is minimized.