

Landscape Design Report

Project Name:

Elmfield Housing, Clondalkin

Client:

Thornmeadow Developments Limited

Revision:

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INDEX

1 - Introduction and Site Context	3
1.1 – Location and Existing Site Description	4
1.2 – Landscape Design Proposal and Philosophy	5
1.3– Design Parameters and Considerations	8
2 - Landscape Infrastructure and Details	9
2.1 – Biodiversity, Green and Blue Infrastructure	9
2.2 – Biodiversity Net Gain Statement	11
2.3 – Landscape materials	11
2.4 – Planting	11
2.5 – Standards and specifications	12
2.6 – Aftercare	13
3 – Green space factor assessment	15
4 – Closing Statement	16

1 - INTRODUCTION

Austen Landscape Architects are a team of Landscape Architects who work to create both distinctive and environmentally sustainable landscapes. Our philosophy, with regard to landscape, stems from a desire to both enrich peoples' lives and to minimise our impact on the natural world and in this regard the practice will always attempt to introduce principles of sustainability into its designs.

Austen Landscape Architects have been commissioned by Thorn meadow Developments Limited to prepare a landscape design plan for the proposed Elmfield Housing, Clondalkin, in County Dublin. Working closely with the design team, we aim to deliver a high-quality design.

These requirements encompass the provision of open spaces and designated play areas, the enhancement of biodiversity, and the successful integration and enhancement of existing green infrastructure. These are supported by a range of guiding documents that inform and underpin our design approach as outlined below:

- Guidance of the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design with regard to universal access requirements.
- Building Regulations, part M.
- Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide, Department of Environment Health and Local Government publication
- Buildings for everyone- A Universal Design Approach, National Disability Authority publication
- Design Manual for Urban Streets and Roads, Department of Transport tourism and Sport publication
- All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025
- Biodiversity Net Gain in Ireland, August 2024, CIEEM Ireland Policy Group
- Advice notes issued from the Irish Landscape Institute
- Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas, Water Sensitive Urban Design, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland.

1.1 – Location and Existing Site Description



Image 1 – Elmfield site location in the area of Clondalkin (Site area outlined with red line)

The subject site is located at Elmfield, in the heart of Clondalkin, Dublin. Currently in use for warehouse storage and distribution, the lands are classified as brownfield and present a strategic opportunity for regeneration. Situated close to Clondalkin town centre, the site is well positioned to contribute to the ongoing consolidation and sustainable expansion of the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Area.

Physically, the site is characterised by extensive areas of hardstanding and built structures with limited existing vegetation or amenity value. Its central position offers significant potential to introduce a new landscape framework that strengthens connectivity, provides usable public open space, and supports ecological enhancement within an urban context.

Accessibility is a key asset of the location. The commuter rail service at Clondalkin/Fonthill Station connects directly to Dublin City Centre within a short journey and is only a 6-minute cycle from the site. The LUAS Red Cow light rail station is reachable within 11 minutes by bicycle, offering rapid transit to the city centre and wider connections. In addition, the National Transport

Authority has proposed a Core Orbital Bus Corridor that will pass immediately beside the site, further strengthening sustainable transport options.

The area is also well served by educational infrastructure, ranging from early childhood care to higher education. Within a 5-minute walking catchment there are 10 montessori/pre-schools, 8 primary schools (including Gaelscoileanna and denominational options), and 2 secondary schools. At third level, Technological University Dublin (Tallaght campus) is accessible within a 15-minute drive or a 21-minute cycle. This rich network of educational facilities supports family life and reinforces the suitability of the site for residential-led development.

Together, these characteristics highlight the site's strategic location and its strong potential to deliver a high-quality housing environment supported by sustainable transport, community infrastructure, and landscape-led placemaking.

1.2 - Landscape Design Proposal and Philosophy



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Image 2 – Extract from the Landscape plan, 096925_LP_01

Thornmeadow Developments Limited intend to apply for permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development on lands at the Securispeed Logistics site, Elmfield, Ninth Lock Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22. The proposed development will consist of the demolition of the existing warehouses and structures on site and the construction of a mixed-use residential-led development comprising a total of 408 no. residential units and 1 no. childcare facility. The residential units will comprise a mixture of apartments and own-door houses and range in height from 2-9 storeys.

The proposed development will also comprise all associated car parking 202 no. spaces, adequate cycle parking provision, refuse and storage areas, plant, landscaping, open space, boundary treatment, public lighting, ESB substations, and site and infrastructural works necessary to facilitate the proposed development.

The landscape design presents a unified approach that works seamlessly with the architectural layout and finishes. The arrangement of interlinked spaces creates a cohesive environment that blends naturally with its surroundings, establishing a strong sense of place for all future occupants.

Public open spaces have been carefully positioned in response to the layout, movement patterns and overall site functionality. Their placement strengthens the relationship between buildings, roads and parking areas while providing attractive, useable spaces that enrich daily life for residents.

The design incorporates passive areas for sitting, walking, and viewing, balanced by more active nature play elements. All components are set within a thoughtfully developed landscape that enhances the existing site and improves overall useability significantly.

Planting areas play a central role in screening and softening the development, adding aesthetic value while supporting biodiversity and the wider green infrastructure network. Opportunities to enhance ecological quality have informed the inclusion of native planting, complemented by boardwalks, bridges and stepping stones that offer residents of all ages unique opportunities to engage with nature and experience these habitats. These planting work in tandem with our nature based SuDs strategy, managing excess surface water in an environmentally sensitive manner. Green roof areas incorporating wildflower planting mixes are also proposed throughout the development to enhance the overall green factor, support biodiversity.

A framework of street and amenity tree planting is proposed, incorporating native Irish species of varied forms. Trees will be planted with a minimum clear stem height of 2m to maintain visibility and safety while contributing to the development of a maturing canopy. Shrub and avenue planting will include resilient, biodiversity supporting species such as *Enkianthus campanulatus*, *Viburnum opulus*, *Euonymus europaeus*, *Rosa canina*, *Amelanchier lamarckii*, and selected *Salix* species. Additional shrub and perennial mixes, comprising both native and ornamental evergreens will provide year round structure, low maintenance requirements and strong ecological value.

Native hedgerows define and soften the boundaries creating stable wildlife corridors offering food and shelter for wildlife while linking the site to the wider landscape and enhancing habitat connectivity.

SuDs measures are integrated throughout the design, with swale planting intended to manage surface water while delivering long term climate resilience. Predominantly native planting within these swales will contribute towards supporting drainage management and provide valuable pollinator and wildlife habitats. Timber stepping stones, informal pathways and pockets of naturalistic planting form a part of a wider 'Nature Journey', offering opportunities for exploration and strengthening both the experiential and ecological value of the green infrastructure.

Communal courtyard spaces are conceived as natural retreats, providing residents with a variety of 'break out areas' to relax, socialise and connect with nature. Planting is arranged to balance shade, screening and provide sensory enrichment, while carefully curated seating areas provide small pockets of calm for rest and reflection. In the wider open spaces, nature play elements, including climbing features, gentle mounding and open grassed areas encouraging active use and intergenerational interaction, supporting both social and physical well-being.

Block 4 includes a podium open courtyard arrangement, with parking relocated to ground level beneath. The podium landscape incorporates areas of grass mounding, retained by low retaining walls, with tree planting proposed above to provide structure, shade, and visual amenity. Small ornamental tree species such as *Acer palmatum* and *Amelanchier lamarckii* are proposed at podium level where appropriate, contributing seasonal interest and enhancing the residential character of the space. This elevated landscape will function as a communal open space, maintaining the overall landscape strategy and design intent.

A roof garden is also proposed at Block 2, incorporating shrub planting, perennial planting areas, and permeable grass paving to create an additional communal amenity space for residents. Glazed screening elements are proposed adjacent to parapet edges where appropriate to provide privacy and reduce overlooking between adjoining balconies, while maintaining openness, natural surveillance, and visual connectivity throughout the space.

On entering the site, the central avenue has been designed as a lush, foliage rich corridor featuring low growing native shrubs, grasses and perennials that deliver seasonal interest, reinforce biodiversity and softens the presence of hard landscaping. Combined with its network of footpaths, cycleways, and shared surfaces, this avenue forms an ecological and visual spine that cohesively ties the site together.

Our design philosophy is rooted in creating landscapes that serve 'people, place, and planet'. At Austen Landscape Architects, we design with purpose and care, shaping enduring spaces

that connect communities, celebrate local identity, and nurture the natural environment. Through a holistic approach that integrates native planting, nature based solutions, and a community focused design, the landscape strategy delivers a sustainable, biodiverse and engaging environment.

1.3 – Design Parameters for the Landscape Plan

The landscape design has been guided by a series of key parameters and criteria that inform the development and refinement of the proposals. These considerations ensure that the design responds appropriately to the site context, functional requirements, and long-term sustainability objectives. The following elements have been central to the design process and will continue to guide decision-making throughout detailed design:

- Site boundaries and topography
- Accessibility and circulation (e.g. paths, ramps, permeability and accessibility)
- Safety requirements
- Planting preferences (e.g. native species, low maintenance, biodiversity conscious planting, low grow species within the central avenue to ensure compatibility with the existing pylon and the defined exclusion zone height requirements).
- Maintenance considerations
- Community and Recreational needs
- Environmental goals (e.g. biodiversity, retention of existing tree presence and maturity)
- Residential amenity provision and elevated landscape design (including podium and rooftop gardens incorporating planting, permeable surfaces, and privacy screening measures to support biodiversity, usability, and visual comfort)

2 – LANDSCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE AND DETAILS

2.1 – Biodiversity, Green and Blue Infrastructure

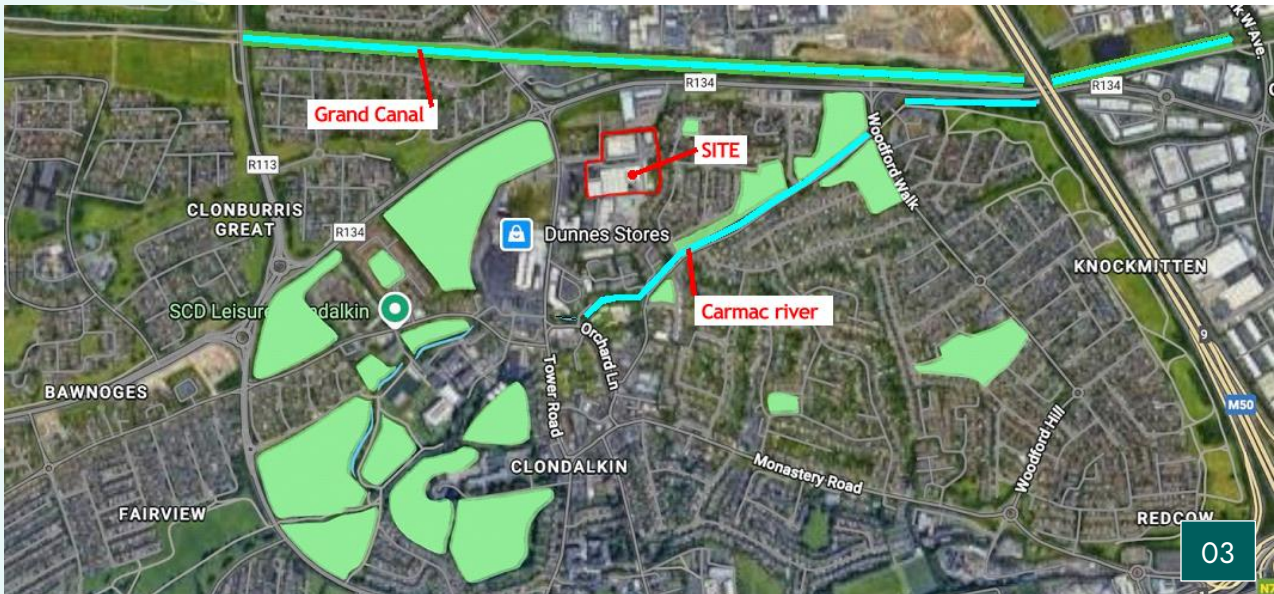


Image 3 – Extract from Google Maps showing the surrounding areas around the site (outlined in red) that are existing contributory green open spaces and areas (shown in green).

The site is located in the northern part of Clondalkin Town Centre, with existing access provided from Ninth Lock Road to the west. At present, the warehouse and distribution use generates significant volumes of heavy traffic, and the site lacks meaningful integration with surrounding green and blue assets. However, the wider context provides strong opportunities for the creation of a cohesive blue-green infrastructure network.

The landscape setting of Clondalkin includes numerous existing green pockets distributed throughout neighbouring residential estates, the local leisure centre, and public parks. While these spaces are currently fragmented and vary in quality, they present significant potential to be better connected and enhanced through coordinated landscape interventions. The wider blue infrastructure is defined by two important waterways: the Carmac River and the Grand Canal, which contribute valuable ecological and recreational corridors within the area.

A continuous strip of existing vegetation is also present along sections of the Grand Canal corridor, comprising established trees, scrub vegetation, and naturalised planting. This existing green edge contributes positively to the ecological character of the canal corridor and has informed the development of the proposed Green Infrastructure strategy, which seeks to reinforce and complement these existing landscape features.

The South Dublin County Council *Clondalkin Framework Plan* (2011) identifies the importance of strengthening green infrastructure and public realm networks in this area. Section 5.4 of the framework specifically highlights the need to:

- Develop a green network linking Corkagh Park with the Grand Canal.
- Introduce landscape design strategies for open areas beneath the existing powerline corridor (which crosses through the subject site), ensuring these spaces are safe, usable, and environmentally valuable.
- Improve cycle networks and sustainable transport connections to foster safer, more accessible neighbourhoods.

Chapter 4 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022–2028 identifies the Grand Canal Corridor as a key strategic Green Infrastructure corridor of both ecological and recreational importance. The Canal functions as a significant biodiversity corridor, supporting ecological connectivity between Dublin and the wider rural hinterland, while also providing important recreational and amenity value. The Development Plan further recognises the importance of protecting and strengthening the ecological integrity of the Canal corridor within urban areas, where increased development pressure and recreational use have the potential to fragment existing habitats and ecological connections.

The proposed landscape and Green Infrastructure strategy responds to these objectives by reinforcing existing vegetated corridors adjacent to the Grand Canal, strengthening ecological connectivity, and integrating new planting, SuDS features, and pedestrian and cycle linkages that complement the wider strategic Green Infrastructure network within Clondalkin and the surrounding area.

The proposed landscape design will respond directly to these objectives by establishing new open spaces, ecological corridors, and pedestrian and cycle connections that integrate the site into the wider green and blue network. The inclusion of SuDS swales and nature-based planting solutions within the site will complement the role of the Camac River and Grand Canal, contributing to water management, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Through these measures, the development will not only improve its immediate environment but also play an important role in reinforcing the wider green infrastructure strategy for Clondalkin, helping deliver a safer, more connected, and sustainable neighbourhood.

2.2 – Biodiversity Net Gain Statement

This landscape design has been developed to achieve measurable Biodiversity Net Gain by ensuring that the development leaves biodiversity in a better state than it was before. Impacts on existing ecological features have been carefully considered, with a focus on protecting valuable assets, enhancing existing habitats, and introducing new ecological features to increase overall biodiversity value.

	Existing Site	Proposed Design
Trees	None of crucial significance or retention	395no.
Native and biodiverse Hedgerow	None of crucial significance or retention	1756 lin.m
Biodiversity and Pollinator Friendly Planting	30m ²	8978m ²

The design incorporates native and pollinator-friendly planting, the creation of diverse habitats, and green infrastructure that strengthens ecological connectivity within the site and its surroundings. The inclusion of green roof wildflower planting and perennial planting mixes further contributes to the ecological value of the scheme, enhancing pollinator resources and increasing the overall green factor across the development.

2.3 – Landscape Materials

Our selection of the hardscape materials and furniture stems from a desire to make spaces that feel of natural, welcoming, and enduring. All the materials were chosen to have the ability to blend with the park's landscape character whilst also providing durability, comfort and accessibility for anyone passing through or frequenting the park. The colours chosen tie together the paths, play areas, and social spaces through a palette of warm, neutral tones and natural textures to give the park a feeling of connectivity and cohesiveness with its surroundings. The combination will strike a balance we look for between functionality and a sensory experience whilst ensuring durability, longevity and low maintenance.

2.4 – Planting

The planting scheme has been carefully developed to reflect the needs of the site and allow it to flourish as a core landscape element within its wider context and surrounds. The proposed planting priorities native, climate resilient and robust species that provide structure, screening, and seasonal interest while making a strong contribution to a wider biodiversity presence,

provide food and shelter for various birds and animals contributing to the wider surrounding habitats and the overall well-being of the future residents.

Other proposed planting mixes feature low maintenance species that also deliver high biodiversity value and support pollinator friendly habitats. These mixes include shrubs, perennials, native specimens, along with butterfly and bee friendly wildflower areas.

Large areas of open grass will be retained to support the multifunctional requirements of the community such as open play, gathering, and informal recreation, ensuring a balanced relationship between biodiversity, accessibility and active and passive use of spaces.

2.5 – Standards and specifications

- All relevant standards referred to in the landscape specifications shall be Irish Standards/ British or European Standards.
- Principles of Universal Accessibility shall apply to all design. Building regulations Part M shall be apply to design on approaches to buildings.
- Tactile and blister paving shall be laid in compliance with the prevailing norms and standards.
- All materials required for paving shall be from a source approved by the Landscape Architect.
- Full specifications for workmanship and quality shall accompany the tender documentation.
- All landscape works shall be fully quantified.
- Topsoil shall conform to B.S. 3882:2015
- All plant material shall comply with the requirements of B.S. 3936: Parts 1-11 Specification for Nursery Stock. Advanced nursery trees shall comply with B.S. 5236: 1992
- A design risk assessment shall be prepared for all landscape works.
- Grass seed shall include a nurse species, such as dwarf rye grass and shall include a range of fescue and bent grasses to create a diverse sward. The grass shall obtained from recognised suppliers who will supply a list of the species, their percentage composition within the mix and the seeds sources.

2.6 – Aftercare

A maintenance plan will be instigated by the developer.

Period:

The Contractor shall be responsible for aftercare of the completed works for 2 years from the date of completion of planting, including adequate watering of vegetation during dry periods of weather.

Organisation:

The aftercare program will be organised as follows:

- (a) Scheduled operations, in whose timing the Contractor will be permitted some flexibility, and which will be the basis of payment to the Contractor.
- (b) Performance standards, which the Contractor is required to meet at all times, and on which his performance will be assessed.
- (c) Critical dates, by which time scheduled operations, shall have been completed, and at which performance will be assessed.

Weed Control:

Weed control operations must be carried out in line with relevant legislation and European regulations, in particular the European Communities Sustainable Use Directive 2012. Non-chemical methods of weed control are to be prioritised over the use of chemical sprays.

Particular care is to be taken for the identification and control of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. If identified on site a method statement for its eradication is to be drawn up for its eradication. This is to include the taking of a photographic, mapping and written record of the plant location, size and any treatment undertaken.

All areas within the subject site are to receive weed control maintenance.

Watering:

The Contractor is responsible for the watering of all trees and shrubs during the maintenance period.

Plant Replacements

Following planting the site will be inspected in spring and again in the following September. Any tree or shrub found to have died from any cause except as provided below or the work of other Contractors shall be replaced by the Contractor at his own expense. Replacement planting shall conform in all respects with this Specification, including all specified excavation, provision and incorporation of all fertilizers and ameliorants.

Failures will not be charged to the Contractor in the following cases: -

- Damage by hares or rabbits, where protection by fencing or shelters was not originally specified.
- Damage by livestock, where protection by fencing was not originally specified.
- Failure solely due to prolonged dry weather, except where the Contractor will be responsible for watering.
- Losses due to theft, vandalism or disturbance by other Contractors.
- Persistence of weeds in planted areas will be regarded as a contributory cause of failure due to drought.
- Performance standards:

The following maintenance standards shall be upheld for the duration of the maintenance period:

Performance Standards for Trees and Plants:

- All plants shall show signs of healthy growth throughout the growth season after planting e.g. bud break, leaf extension, and branch extension, normal for such species.
- All plants shall not show signs of drought for any period exceeding five days. Such signs include change in leaf colour, withering leaves or leaves dropping.
- For all trees and shrubs pruning shall be carried out to ensure removal of dead or damaged branches and the retention of a healthy crown shape throughout the growing season.
- The trees shall not show signs of bark damage as a result of failure to loosen tree ties.

Performance Standards for Grass:

- The grass sward should be thick, healthy, a lush green colour and not deficient in nutrients. It should be dominated by the sown grasses and capable of out competing persistent weeds and ensuring year-round ground cover. The Contractor shall make good any areas not of this quality. Make up and seed over any depressions which develop after seeding. Re-cultivate and re-seed any areas which fail to germinate, or which die off.

Performance Standards for Hard landscape:

General maintenance guidelines on an <u>annual</u> basis as per contract specifications, overall 1-year maintenance programme in total from month of commencement i.e. 12 months													
Operation			Date by month starts January										
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Yearly maintenance to trees and shrubs													
Weed control in grass areas					X			X					
Top up Mulch			X							X			
Fertilise grass areas				x					X				
Trim edges to beds and hardscape					X				X				
Stone, litter from grass areas			X					X					
Pruning		X							x				
Hand weed all planting			x		X		x			x			
Litter removal	X				X			X				X	
Watering				x	x	x	x	x	x				
Check stakes and ties			x				X						
Fertilise trees and plants				X						X			
Leaf/debris removal	x				X					x		x	

3 – GREEN SPACE FACTOR ASSESSMENT

The proposed landscape strategy has been developed in accordance with the South Dublin County Council Green Space Factor (GSF) Tool and the wider green infrastructure objectives outlined within the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022–2028.

The assessment demonstrates that the proposed development achieves the minimum required Green Infrastructure (GI) score through the integration of biodiversity-focused planting, SuDS measures, tree planting, communal open spaces, green roof proposals, and other nature-based landscape interventions throughout the site.

Refer to **Appendix A – Green Space Factor Assessment** for the detailed GSF calculations associated with the proposed development.

4 – CLOSING STATEMENT

The proposed landscape design for the development at Elmfield, Clondalkin, provides a coordinated and integrated response to both the site and its wider urban context. It delivers a high-quality residential environment supported by a clear and structured landscape framework. The design prioritises the creation of functional, accessible open spaces that support recreation, movement, and social interaction, while ensuring a strong relationship between built form and landscape. A connected network of open spaces, tree planting, SuDS features, green roofs, and green corridors establishes a coherent and legible environment for future residents.

Biodiversity and sustainability are central to the proposal, with native planting, habitat creation, and nature-based drainage measures enhancing ecological value and contributing to the wider green infrastructure network. The incorporation of podium-level communal amenity spaces and a roof garden at Block 2 further strengthens the quality and usability of open space provision within the scheme, while ornamental and seasonal planting contributes to the overall residential character and visual amenity of the development.

Overall, the landscape strategy delivers a cohesive, sustainable, and people-focused design that enhances the character of the development, achieves the required Green Infrastructure objectives, and supports the creation of a high-quality residential environment for future occupants.