

# Merlin Woods Social & Affordable Housing Project

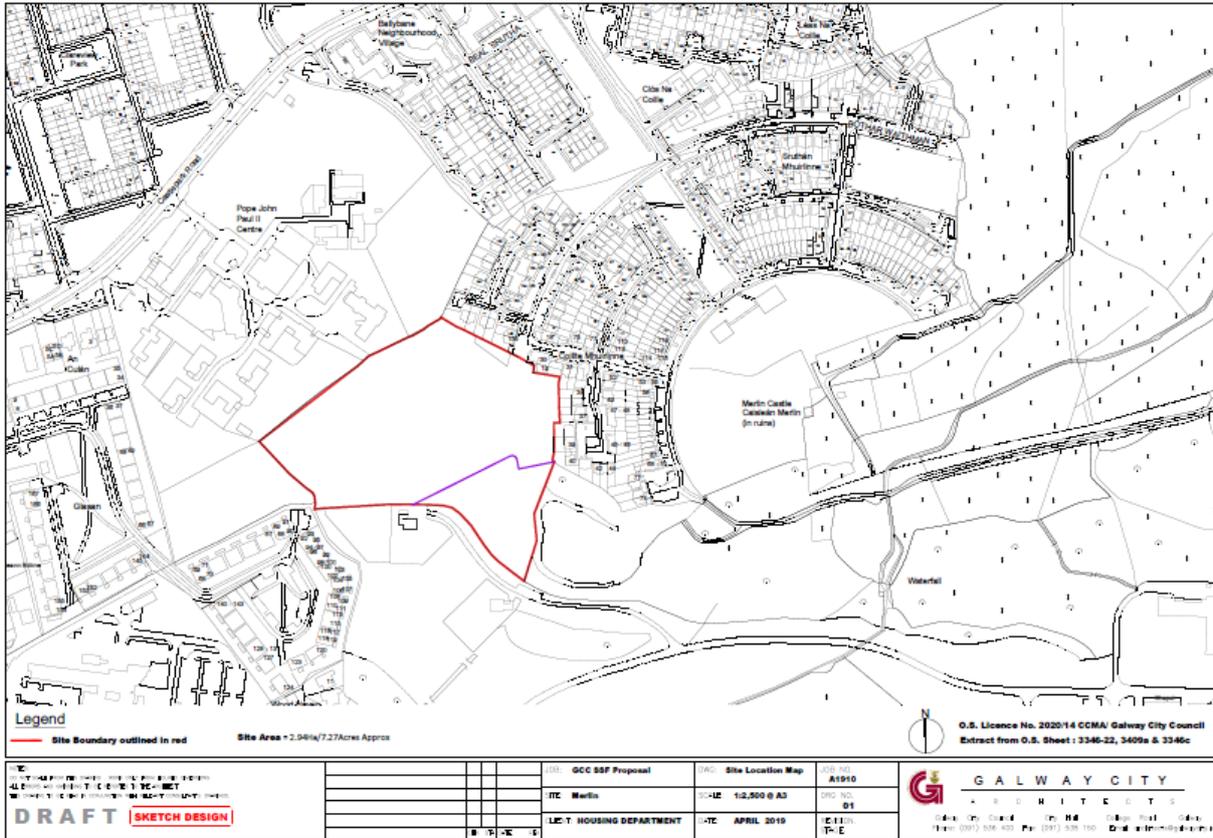
Report for Housing SPC

Galway City Council

19<sup>th</sup> February 2021



**Site Location:**

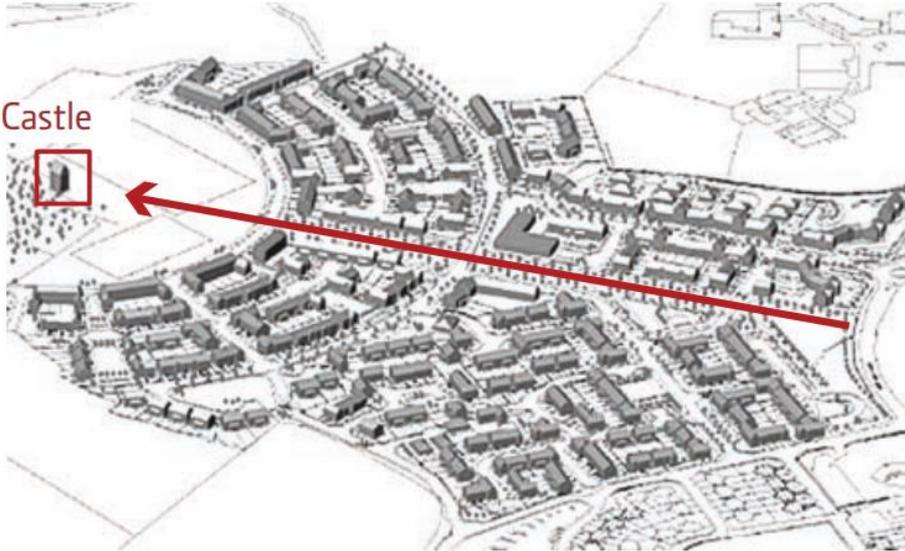


The site is located to the West of the Coillte Mhuirinne and is only possible to gain access (at this moment in time) through the existing estate. The site was part of a larger master plan that was included in the Urban Design Manual (page 50) and a service road was left for the connection of these lands.



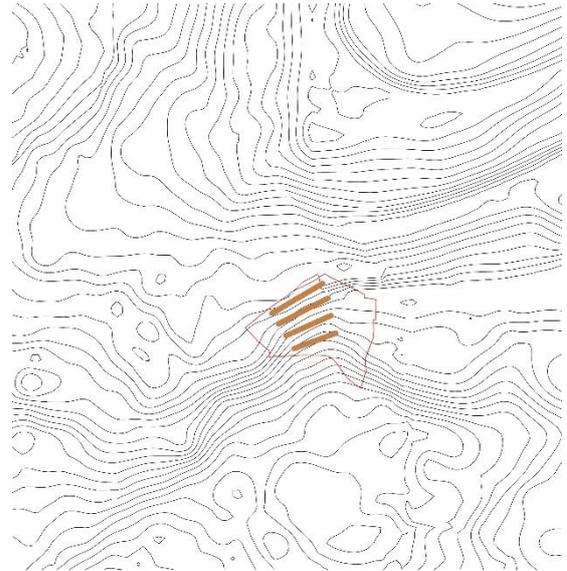
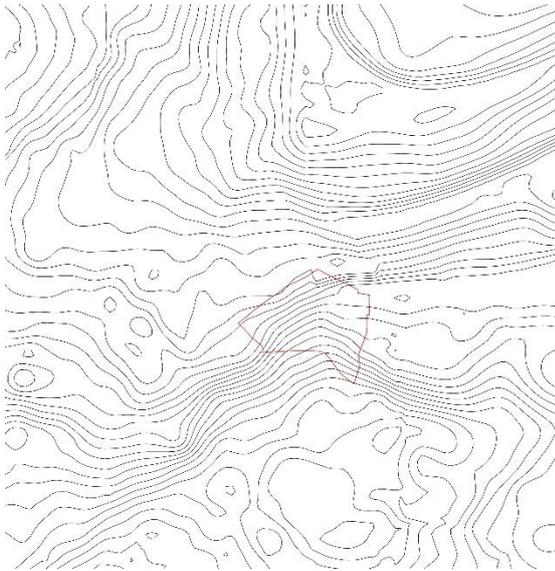
Service Road Connection

Proposed Masterplan Urban Design Manual



An axial route at a residential development at Merlin Park in Galway exploits a castle to give a unique local identity to the site.

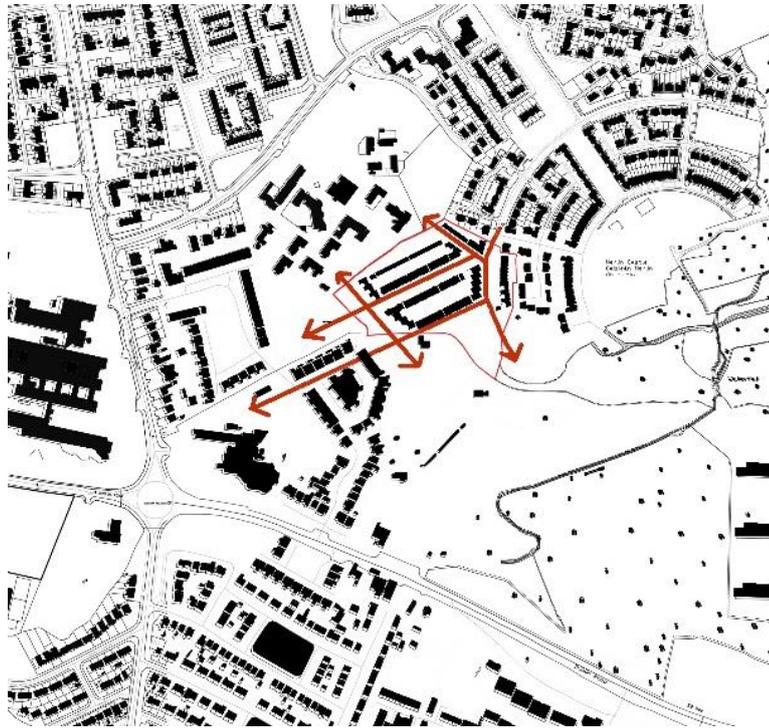
**Design Considerations:**



The site is quite steep in section. The natural way to develop the site would be along the contours of the site. This allows for level streets which promotes level access and ease of foundations/groundworks.

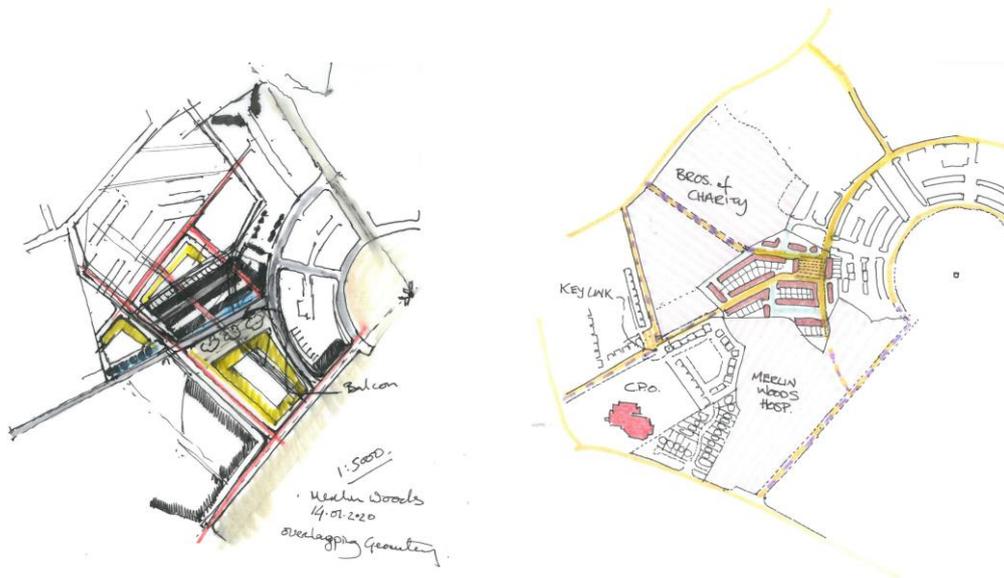


The above study of the figure ground drawings (left: Existing, right: proposed) demonstrates that there is a lot of conflicting geometry in the area.



The above sketches demonstrate the possible connections that this site has to the neighbouring plots. The live/work units and the crèche are placed on the connecting curved street.

The smaller connections allow for future permeability and local connection.



The above left sketch looked at the overlapping geometry and tried to use it to form order in the proposal. The right sketch looks at the possibility of future connections.

**Existing Feature:**



The vista to the south is very beautiful towards the trees of Merlin Wood. As the ground is elevated the housing will sit at the same level as the tree tops and will have excellent light. We have design the project so that the project faces this view and does not turn its back on the view. The large green space is connected to this view and becomes part of the greater Merlin Woods.



We identified that there is a lot of quality in the existing landscape feature of the site. By not facing the rear gardens onto the boundaries we are able to retain these features. This will add to the quality of the residential amenity, reduce construction cost, have a lower impact on the natural habitat and have a good quality relationship between the built environment and green zoned land. It also allows for the future connections and permeability.

## Proposal:

The project is divided into four main briefs:

- Affordable Housing
- Social Housing
- Live/Work Units
- Crèche

## Affordable Housing:

The main body of the project is affordable housing. The housing units are laid out in terraces that follow the contours of the land. The Site Service Fund from the Department has afforded GCC the opportunity to subsidise housing for people who do not meet the social housing criteria. This fund will give 44,500€ (plus 5,500€ from Galway City Council Funds) to each unit to help lower the cost of the housing. Our proposal looked at a number of income thresholds and to design units to fit this budget without further subsidises. The basic concept is that a bank mortgage could be raised on the basis of 3.5 times the income of the applicants(s) plus a 10% deposit, this is the basis of the budget cost of the unit. The units are very traditional in materiality and form.



The South facing units have a porch seating area to encourage people to sit out in the sun and foster relationships within the community. The bins are also located to the rear to improve the public realm.



### Social Housing:

The end of terrace are predominately social housing units. We are proposing 4 number four bedroom wheelchair user units along with 12 other social units. The wheelchair units will be designed for four families on the waiting list. It is seen that a mix of unit types will be used for different age profiles (i.e. young adults and age friendly units). These units will face towards the street which will create passive policing on these end of terrace conditions.



### Live work units:

We have proposed 5 live work units which are three stories tall. The ground floor is an office/commercial/service provider with 3 bedroom maisonette over the next two floors. The location of these units is on the curved street as you enter the development. There is a large plaza at the front which is seen as a play areas similar to Aldo Van Ekke's playground in Amsterdam.



## Crèche:

As per the Development Plan, in all new housing areas over 75 units, provision of 1 childcare facility with minimum 20 child capacity is required. An outdoor play area separate to parking at a rate of 55% of the gross floor area and parking for staff at a rate of 1 space per 20m<sup>2</sup> of operational space shall be incorporated. As there is no brief, we have indicated a generic area on the site which is slightly oversized in play area allowing for variations. Current proposal is as follows;

- 3 no. 0-1yr olds
- 5 no. 1-2yr olds
- 6 no. 2-3yr olds
- 6 no. 3-6yr olds

The above requires a minimum play area of 52.4m<sup>2</sup> with a minimum of 4 no. staff members.

The Crèche is part of the overall urban design concept. It is located at the entrance of the development on the curved street. It has circular windows that mimic the live/work units which mimic the circular street.



