



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For

Proposed Development at 176A Botanic Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 (Reg. Ref. 2642/19)



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared to address the Request for Further Information (RFI) issued by Dublin City Council (DCC) in response to planning application Reg. Ref. 2642/19. The proposed development is a two-storey house on a site (No. 176A) to the rear of No. 176 Botanic Road, adjacent to the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin.

The houses fronting Botanic Road are zoned Residential Conservation Area and this zoning extends to cover the subject site to the rear of No. 176. Additionally, the Botanic Gardens to the north and west of the site are a Conservation Area. The site's receiving environment is thus highly sensitive to change and this has motivated DCC's request for further information on the proposal.

This report and associated photomontages have been prepared to specifically address the question of the proposed development's potential visibility from and visual effects on the Botanic Gardens Conservation Area and the Botanic Road Residential Conservation Area.

1.1 Methodology

The report was prepared with reference to the Landscape Institute's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (GLVIA)* and the EPA draft *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports 2017*. A detailed methodology is provided in Appendix A.

2.0 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

2.1 The Site, Location and Context

The site, No. 176A, is a brownfield plot with a total area of 174 m², located to the rear of No. 176 Botanic Road. No. 176 is an end-of-terrace house. The access road to the Botanic Gardens runs along the side of the house, and along the side of the subject site, leading to the Gardens car park which lies to the rear (west and south) of the site. Across the access road from the site (to the north and west) is a complex of Botanic Gardens buildings and beyond the buildings are the gardens themselves.

The site is a brownfield plot, separate from the rear garden of No. 176. It is currently unused but was previously used as a business premises. It has an entrance gate off the Botanic Gardens access road. The boundary walls are patched remnants of original stone walls and a more recent capped concrete block wall marks the boundary between 176A and 176.

Photos 1 and 2: View from the site towards Botanic Road to the east and towards the Botanic Gardens to the west.



Aerial photograph showing site context.



OS 6 inch map (surveyed 1829-1841).

The site is adjacent to the National Botanic Gardens. The Gardens were founded 1795 on agricultural lands at Glasnevin Demesne, with the aim of understanding, conserving, and sharing the importance of plants. Located 3km from the city centre, at that time Glasnevin was a rural village surrounded by agricultural land.

The OS 6 inch map shows a terrace of houses on the west side of Botanic Road to the south of the gardens. No. 176, behind which the site is located, is the northernmost of these houses.



The 25 inch map from around the turn of the 20th century shows the further urbanisation of the area around the gardens, with additional terraces of houses, predominantly one and two storey red brick terraces, both sides of Botanic Road.

OSI 25 Inch (1897-1913)



The gardens are recognised in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 as being one of the main cultural attractions in the city.

2.2 Architectural Character in the Receiving Environment

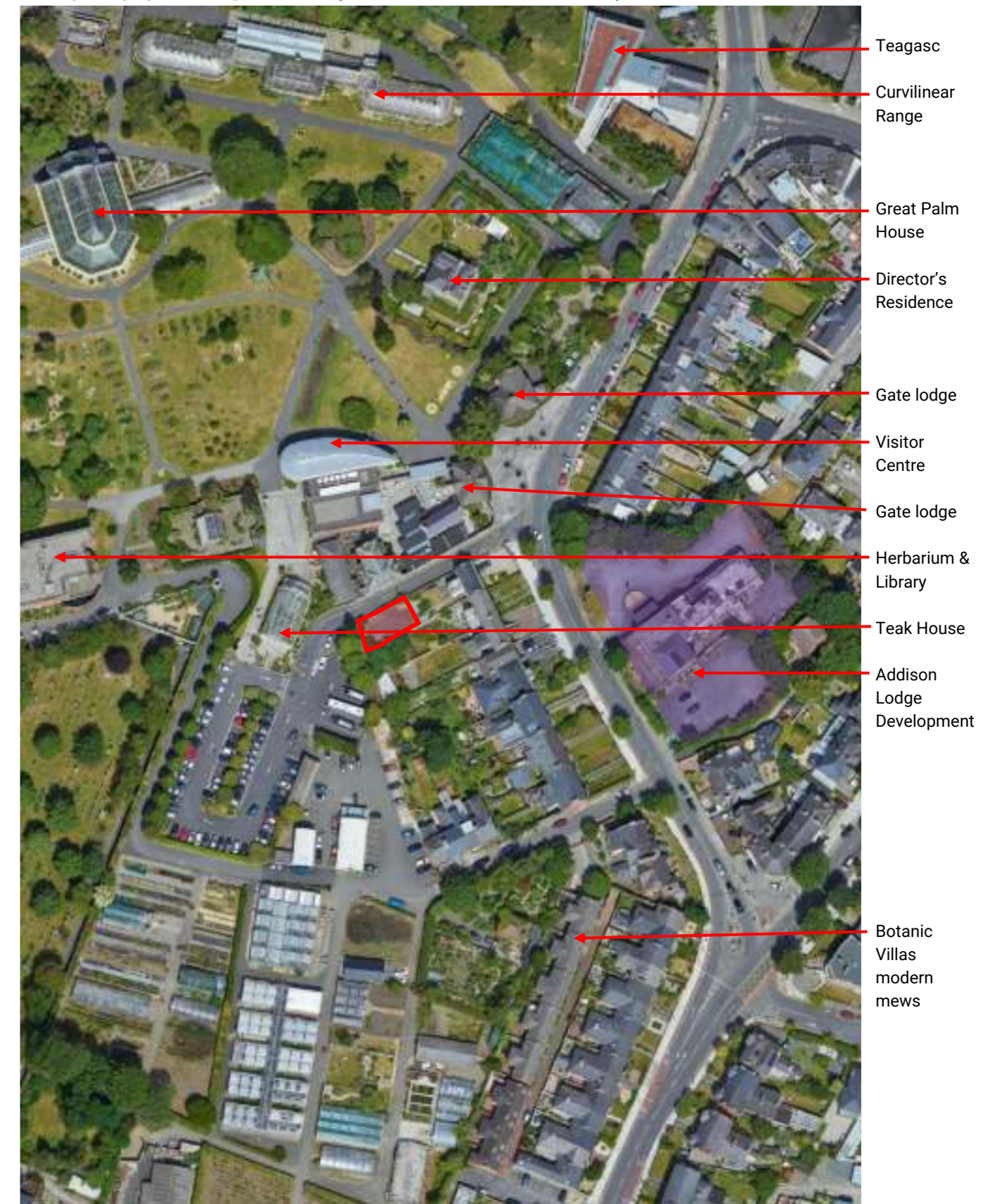
Due in part to the Botanic Gardens the area is characterised by variety in building typology, scale, architecture and materials.

The Gardens buildings include the gate lodges, the Director's House, various glass houses for which the gardens are renowned (including the Great Palm House, Curvilinear Range and Teak House) and several modern buildings of diverse architecture (the Visitor Centre, Herbarium and Library building and the most contemporary building, the timber-clad Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture building). In addition to these there are lesser buildings and structures, with a concentration of these against the Gardens boundary across the access road from the site.

While many of the buildings are individually impressive, attractive and of historic/architectural value, and together they form an interesting collection of buildings tied together by the gardens, they are not a designed collective. There is no uniformity in form, scale or architecture and views within the gardens are characterised by architectural complexity and diversity - as well as the visual amenity generated by the planting.

External to the Botanic Gardens, while currently historic buildings predominate (Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses, all zoned Residential Conservation areas), there are some modern insertions and an increasing degree of diversity. The recent interventions include a row of mews houses (Botanic Villas, one block to the south of the subject site) and a large development under construction at Addison Lodge across Botanic Road from the terrace in front of the site. This four storey development of apartments and townhouses will dramatically alter the character of Botanic Road in the vicinity of the site.

Aerial photograph showing the diversity of architecture in the site vicinity



Botanic Gardens Buildings



Botanic Road Buildings



Addison Lodge development under construction across Botanic Road from the Georgian terrace in front of the site



2.4 Planning Context

2.4.1 Zoning

The site is zoned Z2 in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022: "To protect and/or improve the amenities of residential conservation areas..."

"Residential conservation areas have extensive groupings of buildings and associated open spaces with an attractive quality of architectural design and scale. The overall quality of the area in design and layout terms is such that it requires special care in dealing with development proposals which affect structures in such areas, both protected and non-protected. The general objective for such areas is to protect them from unsuitable new developments or works that would have a negative impact on the amenity or architectural quality of the area."



The Botanic Gardens to the west of the site are zoned open space and a large part of the Gardens are covered by a red lined Conservation Area designation.

2.4.2 Infill and Brownfield Development

The Development Plan promotes intensification and consolidation of land use in the city. This includes infill and brownfield development. Section 16.2.2.2:

"As such Dublin City Council will seek:

- To ensure that infill development respects and complements the prevailing scale, architectural quality and the degree of uniformity in the surrounding townscape
- In areas of varied cityscape of significant quality, infill development will demonstrate a positive response to context, including characteristic building plot widths, architectural form and the materials and detailing of existing buildings, where these contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area
- Within terraces or groups of buildings of unified design and significant quality, infill development will replicate and positively interpret the predominant design and architectural features of the group as a whole
- In areas of low quality, varied townscape, infill development will have sufficient independence of form and design to create new compositions and points of interest and have regard to the form and materials of adjoining buildings, where these make a positive contribution to the area.

2.4.3 Mews Development

Although not strictly a mews development, the policy on mews development may be considered applicable:

"New buildings should complement the character of both the mews lane and main building with regard to scale, massing, height, building depth, roof treatment and materials. The design of such proposals should represent an innovative architectural response to the site and should be informed by established building lines and plot width. Depending on the context of the location, mews buildings may be required to incorporate gable-ended pitched roofs".

"The distance between the opposing windows of mews dwellings and of the main houses shall be generally a minimum of 22 m. This requirement may be relaxed due to site constraints. In such cases, innovative and high

quality design will be required to ensure privacy and to provide an adequate setting, including amenity space, for both the main building and the mews dwelling."

"All parking provision in mews lanes will be in off-street garages, forecourts or courtyards. One off-street car space should be provided for each mews building, subject to conservation and access criteria."

2.4.4 Conservation Areas

The site is located close to the Botanic Gardens Conservation Area (CA). The Development Plan states: "Dublin City Council will seek to ensure that development proposals within all ACAs and CAs complement the character of the area, including the setting of protected structures, and comply with development standards."

Policy CHC4 states: "Development within or affecting a conservation area must contribute positively to its character and distinctiveness, and take opportunities to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting, wherever possible..."

"Enhancement opportunities may include:

1. Replacement or improvement of any building, feature or element which detracts from the character of the area or its setting
2. Re-instatement of missing architectural detail or other important features
3. Improvement of open spaces and the wider public realm, and re-instatement of historic routes and characteristic plot patterns
4. Contemporary architecture of exceptional design quality, which is in harmony with the Conservation Area
5. The repair and retention of shop- and pub-fronts of architectural interest...

"Development will not:

1. Harm buildings, spaces, original street patterns or other features which contribute positively to the special interest of the Conservation Area
2. Involve the loss of traditional, historic or important building forms, features, and detailing including roof-scapes, shop-fronts, doors, windows and other decorative detail
3. Introduce design details and materials, such as uPVC, aluminium and inappropriately designed or dimensioned timber windows and doors
4. Harm the setting of a Conservation Area
5. Constitute a visually obtrusive or dominant form"

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is a two-storey, two bedroom house, occupying the full width of the site, with two courtyard garden spaces and a terrace at first floor level. The house has one on-site parking space, ancillary landscaping and boundary treatment.

The development has a bespoke, contemporary design responding to the sensitivities and character of the receiving environment.

The architect's *Planning Application Report* explains the design approach in detail, including aspects such as (a) the setting back of the first floor level from the neighbouring residential boundaries, (b) the avoidance of any first floor windows overlooking neighbouring residential properties, and (c) the avoidance of overlooking of neighbouring residential properties from the terrace or courtyards. The main design features and characteristics with regard to potential visibility and visual effects include:

- **Built form.** The facades of the building curve around the corners and the parapet curves and slopes (to a maximum height of 6.4m), thus avoiding any semblance of orthogonal form. The objective of the organic/curvilinear form is to soften the building's presence and make it clearly distinct from the strong geometry of the surrounding Georgian and Victorian buildings (whether residential or horticultural). A similar approach was taken with the Visitor Centre in the Botanic Gardens and also (less successfully) with the Herbarium and Library building.
- **Timber cladding.** The exposed façades of the building are clad in closely spaced hard wood timber slats against a black membrane. The façade material (and green roof) is also intended to soften the building's presence, to make it distinct from the surrounding buildings of brick, render, steel and glass, and to reflect the botanic surroundings. A similar approach was taken with the Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture building in the Botanic Gardens.



4.0 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL VISIBILITY

The RFI states:

"...the applicant is requested to submit a detailed assessment of the proposed development as it may impact upon the residential conservation area of Botanic Road and the conservation area that is the National Botanic Gardens directly adjoining..."

"The applicant is also requested to submit justification for the proposed height of the structure as viewed from the east in the context of the National Botanic Gardens and associated protected structures..."

"The impact assessment submitted should contain Computer Generated Images of the proposal as viewed from the surrounding environs..."

To address DCC's concerns, the visibility of the site was initially assessed by physical/visual survey from the Botanic Gardens (see 4.1 below) and Botanic Road (see 4.2 below).

Once it was established from where the development might be visible, representative viewpoints were selected for detailed visual impact assessment informed by verified photomontages of the proposed building. See 5.0 below.

4.1 Visibility from the Botanic Gardens

It was found that the site is hidden from view from most of the Botanic Gardens. Only a few locations were found where a development on the site could protrude into the view (Nos. 03, 04, 09, 10, 12 on the map below). In all cases where visibility is possible, only a small part of the building would be visible in an already complex visual composition. Three representative viewpoints were selected for detailed visual impact assessment, namely Nos. 03, 09 and 10.



01 – Site not visible.



02 – Site not visible.



07 – Site not visible.



08 – Site not visible.



03 – Site/development potentially visible.



04 – Site/development potentially visible.



09 – Site/development potentially visible.



10 – Site/development potentially visible.



05 – Site not visible.



06 – Site not visible.



11 – Site not visible.

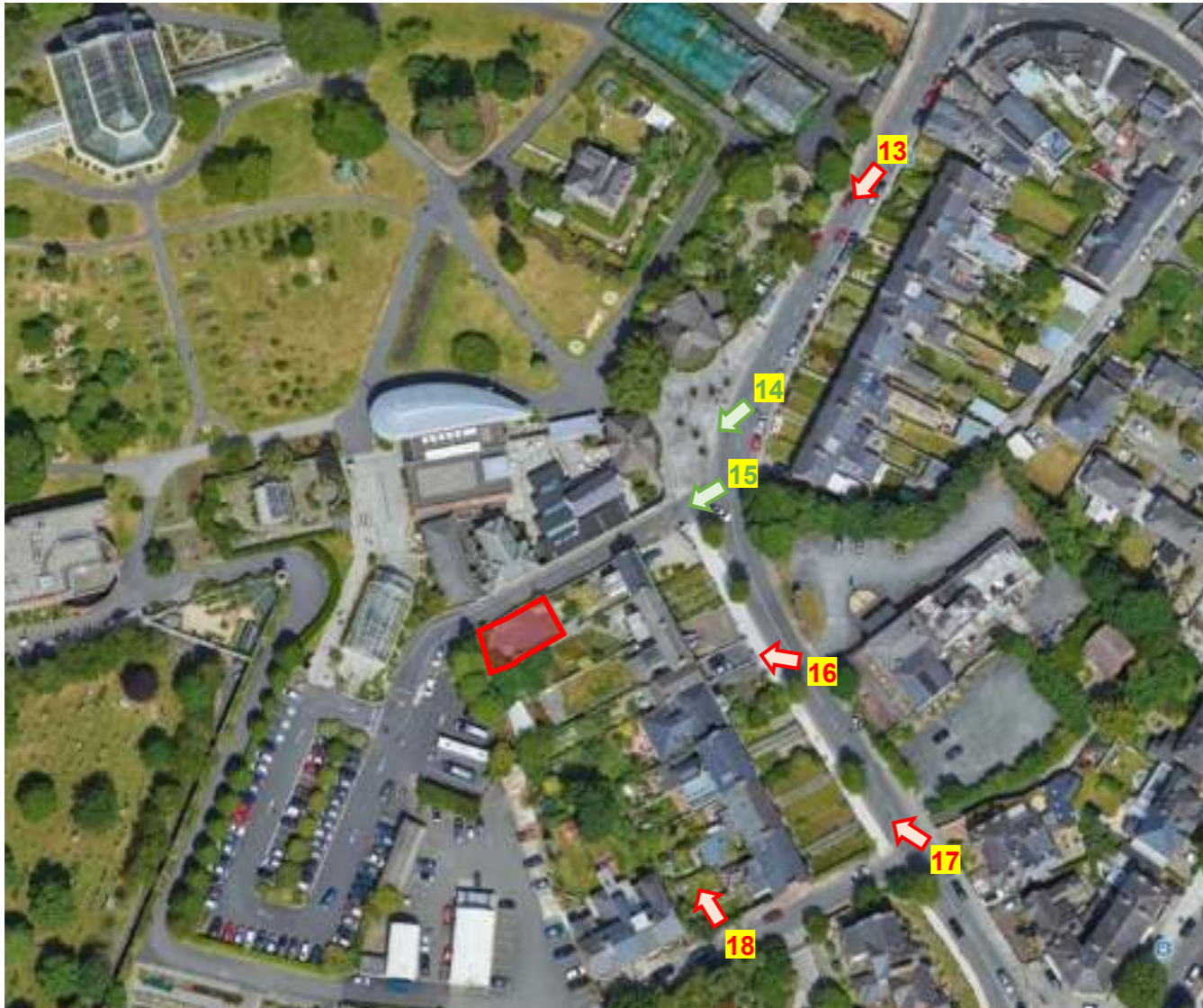


12 – Site/development potentially visible.



4.2 Visibility from Botanic Road

It was found that the site is hidden from view from Botanic Road south of the entrance junction to the Botanic Gardens (Nos. 16, 17, 18 below). From Botanic Road at/opposite the entrance to the Gardens car park (No. 15), the site would be visible at an acute angle. From positions further north along Botanic Road the visibility decreases.



13 – Site not visible.



14 – Site/development potentially visible.



15 – Site/development potentially visible.



16 – Site not visible.



17 – Site not visible.



18 – Site not visible.



5.0 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

Four viewpoints were selected for detailed assessment of the development's potential visual effects, informed by verified photomontages. The effects on the four viewpoints are assessed below. Photographs of the baseline views and photomontages of the proposed development are provided in Appendix A. For the methodology, criteria and terminology used in the assessments refer to Appendix B.

Viewpoint 1 - Botanic Road Opposite Botanic Gardens Entrance

Existing View

- Apart from views from the access road to the Botanic Gardens car park which passes alongside the site), this view from Botanic Road is the clearest view of the site from the public realm - although with no structure on the site currently it is not a noticeable feature of the view.
- The viewpoint was selected as it is the best vantage point from which to assess the potential impact on the residential conservation area of Botanic Road. This is one of the concerns expressed by DCC in the RFI.
- The main elements of the view are the street in the foreground, the Gardens gate lodge to the right (with attached/adjacent auxiliary buildings including, notably, a curved wall rounding the corner) and the Georgian terrace to the left (zoned residential conservation area) framing the entrance to the car park. In the distance beyond the access road/car park a bank of trees in Glasnevin Cemetery adds greenery, and a small part of the Teak House adds to the botanic character and visual amenity of the view.
- The viewpoint sensitivity is high.

Proposed Change

- The curved north east corner and parts of the north and east facades of the house would protrude above the rear garden wall of No. 176, along the side of the Botanic Gardens car park access road.
- Along with the curvilinear form (reminiscent of the curved wall in the foreground alongside the gate lodge) the timber cladding softens the presence of the building.
- The new building is clearly separate from No. 176, and subservient in scale, being lower than the eaves and well below the level of the terrace's pitched roof.
- The form and material of the building also contrast with those of the Georgian terrace (and all the other historic buildings in the view) so that their integrity of form and legibility are in no way compromised.
- While a new built feature would be added to the composition, none of the existing elements, features or characteristics of the view would be lost or compromised.
- Given (a) the minor intrusion of the building in the view, and (b) that it doesn't screen or otherwise affect any other valued features, the magnitude of change would be low.

Significance of Effects

The significance of the visual effects would be 'slight' and the change can be classified positive. The building is of modest scale and would not constitute a visually obtrusive or dominant form (even from close up/adjacent). The composition of the view from Botanic Road would not be substantially altered and no valued element, feature or characteristic of the view would be lost or compromised. The building itself, where visible, would complement the character of the area. It would add a building of contemporary architecture and exceptional design quality, appreciably in harmony with the character of the area.

Viewpoint 2 - Entrance to Botanic Gardens from Car Park

Existing View

- There is a row of trees in the Botanic Gardens car park against the boundary of the site, which largely screens the site from view (even in the winter the bare canopies would have a strong filtering effect).
- At the entrance/exit to the Gardens, beside the Teak House glasshouse, a glimpse along the access road towards Botanic Road is briefly afforded and the site is visible in this view.
- A small part of the rear façade and gable end of No. 176 Botanic Road is visible beyond the site, as are a row of houses on the far side of Botanic Road. These are minor elements in a view in which the Teak House and surrounding vegetation are the defining features.
- The viewpoint sensitivity is high.

Proposed Change

- The curved, timber-clad north façade building would be visible at an acute angle, the remainder of the building screened by the car park boundary trees in spring and summer (or heavily filtered in the winter).
- Part of the rear façade and the gable end of No. 176 would remain visible beyond the new building.
- Given the very minor intrusion in the view, the magnitude of change would be negligible. Most people entering or exiting the Gardens from the car park would not notice the change.

Significance of Effects

The visual effects would be 'not significant' and neutral. While the building would be perceivable there would be no significant change to the composition, character or quality of the view.

Viewpoint 3 - Teak House Courtyard

Existing View

- This position provides the best/least obstructed view towards the site from within the Botanic Gardens.
- Between the hip of the low, modern red brick building and a stand of tall bamboo beside the Teak House in the foreground the roof of the terrace fronting Botanic Road can be seen, with the chimneys prominent.

- In the complex composition in which foreground elements (most notably the Teak House) are dominant, this is a minor element.
- It should also be noted that immediately to the left out of view is a large, modern red brick building attached to the Visitor Centre.



Proposed Change

- The curved parapet of the timber-clad north façade of the house would be visible, framed by the foreground elements. The building would hide the roof of the terrace fronting Botanic Road although the tops of their chimneys would still protrude.
- Given the minor intrusion of the building in the view and the fact that the foreground elements are dominant, this would constitute a low magnitude of change.

Significance of Effects

The significance of the visual effects would be 'slight' and the change would be neutral. While the development would be perceivable, adding a new element to the composition and hiding another, it would not constitute a visually obtrusive or dominant form and would not affect the character of the view. The building would have less visual effect than the car park pay station and vending machine in the foreground. The visual amenity experienced in the Teak House courtyard would be unaffected.

Viewpoint 4 - View from the Great Palm House

Existing View

- The great Palm House stands on a rise in the gardens and in front of the building is a junction of footpaths from which a signature view of the gardens is provided.
- The character of the view is defined by the open space and vegetation but a wide variety of buildings is also visible - of various scale, form, architecture and materials; historic and modern.
- The viewpoint sensitivity is high.

Proposed Change

- A small part of the building would be discernible in the middle distance outside the Gardens boundary. Seen against the backdrop of more distant buildings the timber-clad façade and curved parapet would have very little visual presence.
- The magnitude of change would be negligible.

Significance of Effects

The visual effects would be 'not significant' and neutral. While the building would be perceivable there would be no significant change to the composition, character or quality of the view.

Summary of Visual Effects Assessment

No	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effects
1	Botanic Road opposite Botanic Gardens entrance	High	Low	Slight, Positive
2	Entrance to Botanic Gardens from car park	High	Negligible	Not Significant, Neutral
3	Teak House courtyard	High	Low	Slight, Neutral
4	The Great Palm House	High	Negligible	Not Significant, Neutral

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

This assessment was carried out to specifically address the issues raised by DCC in its RFI:

"...the applicant is requested to submit a detailed assessment of the proposed development as it may impact upon the residential conservation area of Botanic Road and the conservation area that is the National Botanic Gardens directly adjoining.

"The applicant is also requested to submit justification for the proposed height of the structure as viewed from the east in the context of the National Botanic Gardens and associated protected structures..."

"The impact assessment submitted should contain Computer Generated Images of the proposal as viewed from the surrounding environs."

This report has addressed the potential visibility of the proposal by providing computer generated images of the proposed house from the west (Botanic Gardens) and east (Botanic Road), and assessment of its visual effects.

Botanic Road Residential Conservation Area

The Development Plan states the following regarding residential conservation areas: *"...The overall quality of the area in design and layout terms is such that it requires special care in dealing with development proposals which affect structures in such areas, both protected and non-protected. The general objective for such areas is to protect them from unsuitable new developments or works that would have a negative impact on the amenity or architectural quality of the area."*

The assessment found that the proposed development would be visible from only a short stretch of Botanic Road, on passing the entrance to the Botanic Gardens access road (to the car park). For the vast majority of Botanic Road the development would be hidden, and would have no effect on the amenity or architectural quality of the area.

For a short stretch of the Botanic Road where the site is partially visible, and from the access road to the Botanic Gardens car park which passes along the side of the site, the development would be visible. In these views the rounded corners of the building, the curved parapet and the timber cladding would soften its presence. A building of contemporary architecture and distinctive design would be added to the landscape, but it would cause no harm to the terraces fronting the street or the overall amenity of the area. The proposed building is sufficiently removed from the terrace, subservient in height, and sufficiently distinct in form and materials to avoid distorting the appearance of the terrace in any views or diminishing the terrace's presence in the landscape.

Botanic Gardens Conservation Area

The assessment found that the development would be visible from only a limited number of positions in the Botanic Gardens. Where visible, its visual presence would be minimal. There would be no significant change to the composition or character of views (many of which are characterised by variety in the scale, form, architecture and materials of structures – including modern structures), no significant change to the setting of any protected structures and no reduction in visual amenity.

In conclusion, the proposed development can be considered an appropriate intervention in the landscape. A disused brownfield site, which currently makes no positive contribution to the area, would be put to sustainable residential use in keeping with the site's zoning objective. A building of modest scale but exceptional design and material quality would be added to the landscape without causing harm to any existing structure. While contemporary, the building would achieve harmony with its surroundings, reflecting the distinctive botanic character of the area and forming a suitable feature beside the entrance/exit to the Botanic Gardens parking area.