



Parks & Landscape Services Section, Municipal Services Department

**Proposed Development of Fernhill Park & Gardens, Stepside, Co. Dublin with Works within the  
Curtilage of the Protected Structure (Fernhill House)  
PC/PKS/01/17**

**Appendix 3 – Feasibility Study**



## FERNHILL PARK & GARDENS FEASIBILITY STUDY

## Fernhill Park & Gardens Feasibility Study

Stepaside, County Dublin

FINAL REPORT

April 2017



# Acknowledgements

The Consultant Team wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance, encouragement and advice of the Steering Group and Other Consultants throughout the preparation of this study, and in particular:

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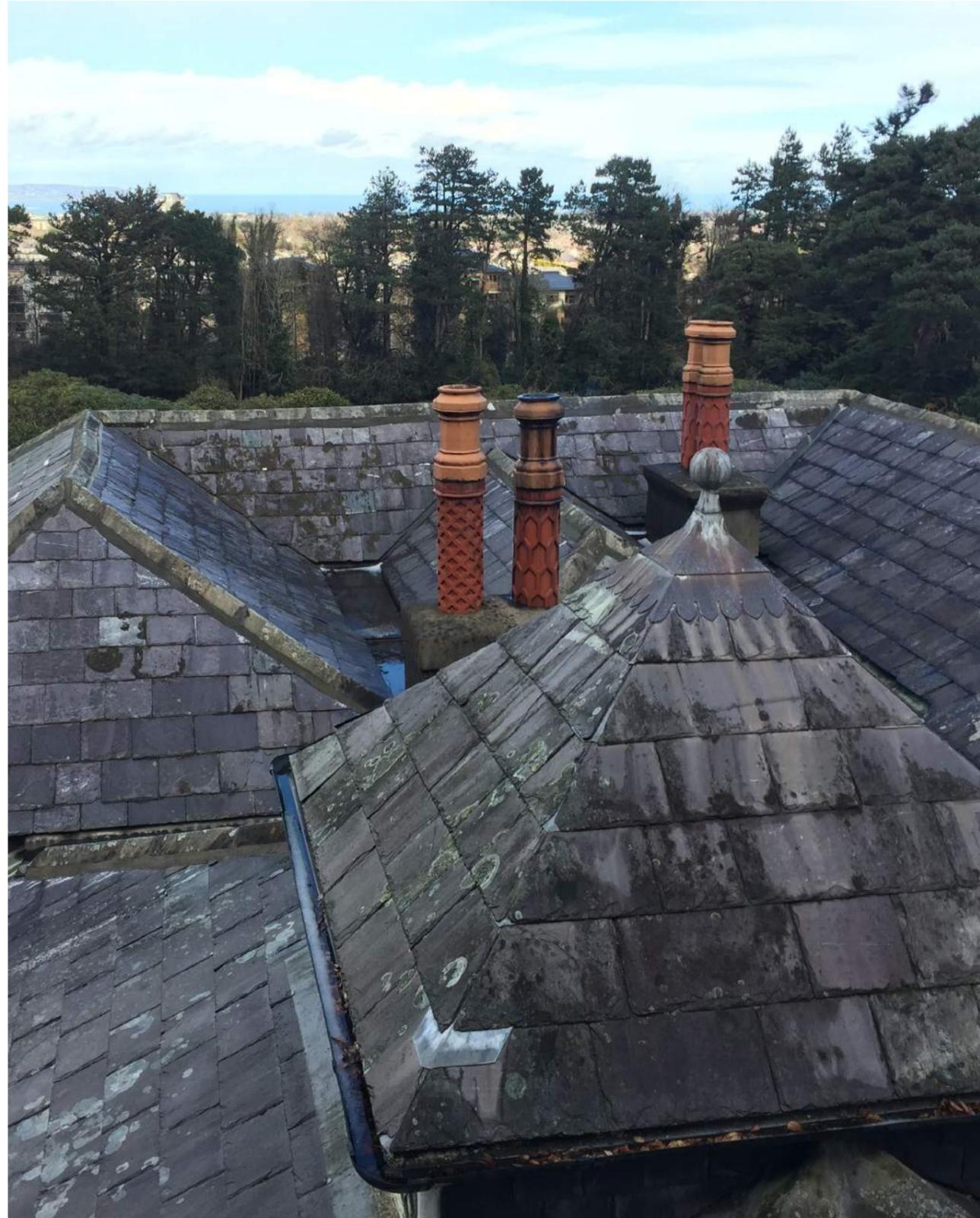
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# 1. Introduction



1.1 Purpose of the Study

1.2 Project Scope

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Study



*Fernhill House and Gardens aerial view*

### Project Overview

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) acquired Fernhill in December 2014 and intends to develop the property as a public park.

Fernhill is a former substantial family residence with ancillary buildings on 34 hectares of land (gardens, parkland, woodland and agricultural land) just south of the Enniskerry Road at Stepside, County Dublin.

The purpose of this study is to provide a full and comprehensive feasibility study and feasible outline design options/proposals for the development of Fernhill Park and Gardens. Following completion of the study, a Masterplan will be developed which will clearly set out and present the overall aspirations for Fernhill as a high quality Regional Park.

### Project Aims & Objectives

At the commencement of the Feasibility Study, the following were considered to be the principal aims and objectives for the development of Fernhill Park and Gardens:

- To develop Fernhill Park and Gardens as a high quality sustainable regional public park.
- To conserve and restore Fernhill House and relevant ancillary buildings and provide suitable and sustainable uses associated with the properties in the setting of the public park.
- To conserve and restore (where appropriate) the gardens, plant collections and woodlands in a sustainable manner.
- To conserve and restore (where appropriate) the landscape heritage features and retain the historic natural character of Fernhill.
- To ensure the agricultural and sylvan character of Fernhill is retained and enhanced where possible.
- To strike a balance between the heritage, people and wildlife while also providing opportunities for active and passive recreation.

- To ensure sustainable innovative proposals and green principles are at the core of the project.
- To provide a suitable range of visitor facilities.
- To develop aesthetically pleasing and functional spaces, while protecting and enhancing heritage features, views and site characteristics, in a manner that will facilitate sustainable maintenance.
- To provide safe and secure access to the park for pedestrians and an appropriate number of vehicles.
- To provide for an appropriate number of car parking spaces in the most suitable location(s) designed to be incorporated in with the character of the site.
- To provide a safe and secure circulation network.
- To provide opportunities for informal and/or formal play.
- To provide a strong link to Barnacullia Road and to the Three Rock Mountain.
- To ensure the right of way is maintained, enhanced and developed as an integral part of the park.

### The General Site and Its Surroundings

Fernhill House and Gardens form an important component of the historic landscape on the fringe of Dublin City and an impressive example of a small estate dating back to around 1723. The former substantial family residence with ancillary buildings is surrounded by gardens, parkland, woodland and agricultural land in an elevated location overlooking Dublin Bay.

In addition to the main house, which requires considerable refurbishment, there are three further residential units in the grounds - a period gate lodge, situated at the main entrance, a garden cottage located adjacent to the walled garden which was converted from a small barn into a residential unit, currently occupied on a life tenancy basis by a member of the Walker family, and a modern system built single storey house situated in the old farm yard.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.2 Project Scope



Fernhill House from the south-east field

Historic records indicate that the estate gardens and an arboretum were established in the 1860's, and extended towards the turn of the 19th century with the inclusion of a number of water features, rockeries and a collection of many unusual Rhododendron varieties.

The general design is said to have been strongly influenced by the Irish 'naturalist' gardener William Robinson (1838–1935), who spurred the movement that evolved into the English Cottage Garden style. Further improvements during the mid-20th century to the walks, additional topographical features and upgrading of the information on the plant collections, facilitated the opening of the gardens to the general public.

The historic natural character of the site presents the opportunity for developing a unique public amenity, not only to serve the residents of DLRCC and surrounding region, but also as a prime visitor attraction in close proximity to Dublin and the Wicklow Mountains National Park.

### Study Structure

Section 2 of the study firstly presents the Site Context of Fernhill House and Gardens in relation to applicable policies of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan (2016-2022), and an appraisal of the role of Fernhill House and Gardens in relation to the Development Plan's Open Space Strategy.

Section 3 comprises a Site Appraisal, with descriptions of landscape character, access and movement, physical characteristics, vegetation and habitats, ground conditions and utilities.

Section 4 provides a summary history of the estate and a description of the development of the gardens, as well as comparable designed landscapes and the influence of William Robinson. The Section concludes with an appraisal of the existing buildings and their associated curtilage and attendant grounds.

Section 5 sets out the overall strategy objectives for the development of Fernhill as a Regional Park in relation to the landscape sensitivity and capacity of the estate, key physical influences, the likely visitor catchment and vehicle access options.

Section 6 presents outline spatial options for the estate and its buildings, and an options appraisal in order to arrive at a preferred option for taking forward to the masterplan stage.

### Other Supporting Documents

A wide range of supporting documents and surveys were undertaken to inform the development of Fernhill Park and Gardens Feasibility Study, including:

- *Preliminary Engineering Report, Fernhill House & Gardens Development* (2016), O'Shea Consulting
- *Research Report for Fernhill House and Gardens, Enniskerry Road, Stepside, Co. Dublin* (June 2016), Architectural Conservation Professionals
- *Fernhill House and Gardens, Ecological Constraints Report* (July 2016), Faith Wilson Ecological Consultant B.Sc.(Hons) Cenv.MCIEEM
- *A Condition Assessment of the Larger Trees Located Around the Formal Grounds of Fernhill Estate* (August 2016), Arborist Associates Ltd., Felim Sheridan F.Arbor.A,RFS Dip,Nat.Dip&NCH. Arb.
- *Ground Investigation Report* (September 2016), Ground Investigations Ireland
- *Historic Gardens Report* (2016), Peter Cuthbert
- *Fernhill House, LIDAR Contours* (August 2014), Roads Project Office, Dun Laoghaire
- *Fernhill House, Stepside, Dublin - Topographical Survey* (Rev.1, 06.12.2016), Murphy Surveys, Kilcullen, Co. Kildare.

# 2. Site Context



2.1 Planning Background

2.2 County Open Space Strategy

# 2. Site Context

## 2.1 Planning Background

### Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan (2016-2022)<sup>(1)</sup>

The Fernhill House Estate is situated within the extensive south-western rural part of the County which mostly comprises the foothills of the Dublin Mountains and the higher plateau areas around Carrickgollogan, Ballycorus, Kiltiernan and Ballyman.

The mountainous areas of the County, extending westwards from Ballyedmonduff Road and providing the scenic backdrop to Metropolitan Dublin, are a highly significant natural feature of the County. They represent areas of high landscape quality, natural heritage and amenity value, as well as containing significant archaeology that includes passage graves, portal tombs and wedge tombs among other features. The Dublin Mountains are recognised in the Development Plan as representing a potential major amenity for both active and passive recreational uses.

Such landscape assets are recognised as non-renewable resources that the Development Plan aims to protect. Specific policies are incorporated that seek to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape character by protecting landscape elements of significance that are intrinsically important or contribute to the general amenity of the County.

It is also the policy of the Council (LHB13) to support the vision and objectives of the Dublin Mountains Strategic Plan for Development of Outdoor Recreation (2007-2017) including the continued development and enhancement of the Dublin Mountains Way and its rerouting off public roads wherever possible.

Within the rural foothill areas, the Development Plan policy relates primarily to balancing the need for broad social and economic development with protecting the area against pressure for inappropriate development generated by its relatively close proximity to the urban area.

The lower foothills, between the mountainous High Amenity Zones and the urban fringe, are zoned in the Development Plan as Objective 'B' - '*To protect and improve rural amenity and to provide for the development of agriculture*'.

The western fields of the Fernhill Estate lie within the area of Zoning Objective B, while the remainder comprises Zoning Objective F - '*To preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities*'.

Uses Permitted in Principle within Zone B include: *Allotments, Agricultural Buildings, Boarding Kennels, Caravan Park-Holiday, Cemetery, Community Facility, Concrete/Asphalt (etc.) Plant in or adjacent to a Quarry, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry-Extractive, Open Space, Place of Public Worship, Public Services, Rural Industry-Cottage, Rural Industry-Food, Travellers Accommodation.*

Uses Open For Consideration within Zone B include: *Abattoir, Carpark, Craft Centre/Craft Shop, Childcare Service, Cultural Use, Doctor/Dentist etc., Education, Enterprise Centre, Garden Centre/Plant Nursery, Guest House, Heavy Vehicle Park, Hospital, Hotel/Motel, Refuse Landfill/Tip, Refuse Transfer Station, Residential, Restaurant, Science and Technology Based Industry, Shop-Neighbourhood, Sports Facility, Tea Room/Café, Transport Depot, Veterinary Surgery.*

Uses Permitted in Principle within Zone F include: *Community Facility, Cultural Use, Open Space, Sports Facility, Travellers Accommodation.*

Uses Open For Consideration within Zone F include: *Allotments, Carpark, Cemetery, Craft Centre/Craft Shop, Childcare Service, Crematorium, Education, Garden Centre/Plant Nursery, Golf Facility, Guest House, Place of Public Worship, Public Services, Tea Room/Cafe.*

The Development Plan states that where lands zoned F are to be developed, then not more than 40% of the land in terms of the built form and surface car parking combined shall be developed upon. Any built form to be developed shall be of a high standard of design including quality finishes and materials. The remaining area (i.e. 60% of the site) shall be set aside for publicly accessible passive open space or playing fields. Said space shall be provided and laid out in a manner designed to optimise public patronage of the residual open space and/or to protect existing sporting and recreational facilities which may be available for community use.

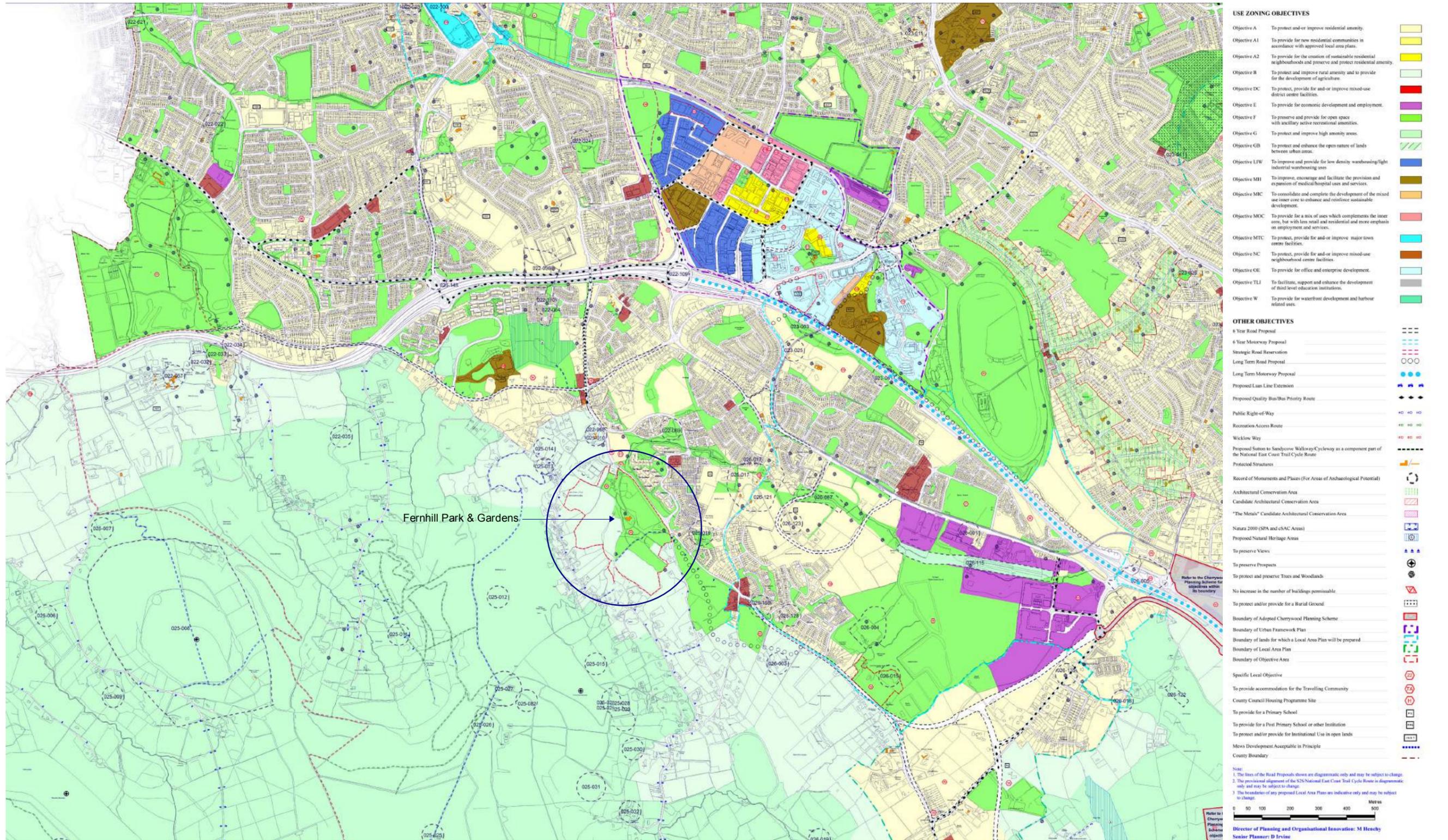
The Fernhill Estate is subject to Specific Local Objective 36, which seeks: *To prepare and adopt a Masterplan to develop Fernhill Gardens into a 'Gateway' Park/Regional Park with all the recreational amenities associated with a major park, such as pitches, playground, ponds, paths and a car park. The Masterplan should also ensure the continued conservation of Fernhill House and the preservation of trees, woodlands and amenity gardens at Fernhill.*

Policy LHB32: Historic Demesnes and Gardens, recognises that Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown contains a wealth of historic houses and their demesnes which contribute to the identity and heritage of the County. It is therefore Council policy that such historic demesnes and gardens are identified and protected to reflect and acknowledge their significance as part of the National Heritage. Fernhill is identified as one of four such houses and gardens within the policy objective, the others are Cabinteely, Marlay and Old Conna.

It is also Council policy to continue to improve, landscape, planting and develop more intensive recreational and leisure facilities within its parks and open spaces, where resources will permit, while ensuring that the development of appropriate complementary facilities do not detract from the overall amenity of the spaces.

# 2. Site Context

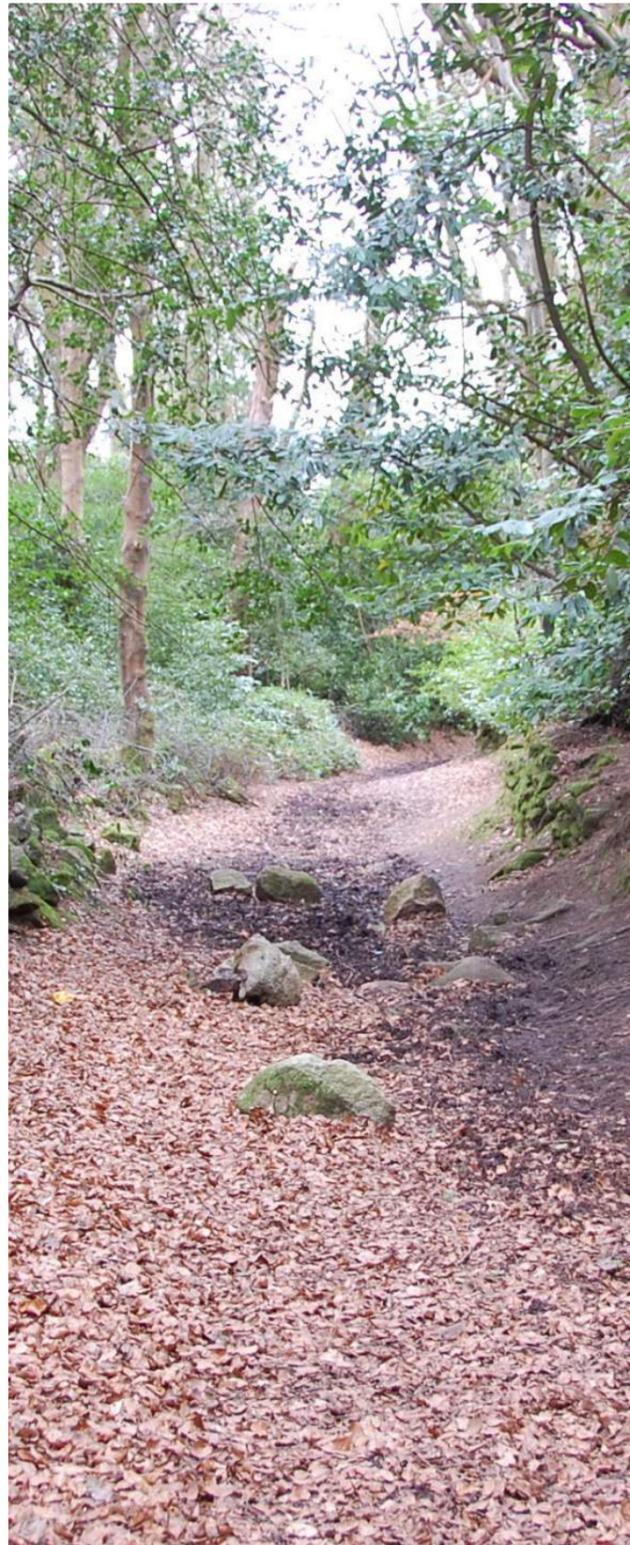
## 2.1 Planning Background



Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022: compiled extracts Maps 5,6,8+9

## 2. Site Context

### 2.1 Planning Background



Fernhill Public Right of Way

The Fernhill House building is designated as a Protected Structure (Ref. 1704), although not presently included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) as this has not yet been undertaken for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County.

There is a further objective in the Development Plan (Policy LHB6: Views and Prospects) that seeks to protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests. Views from Ballyedmonduff Road, to the immediate west of Fernhill, are identified on Map 8 as falling within this policy objective. In the implementation of this policy it is the intention of the Council to:

- Prevent development which would block, or otherwise interfere, with a View which is designated for protection.
- Preserve the Prospects listed in the Plan.

In relation to High Amenity Landscapes and Views and Prospects:

*Planning applications that have the potential to adversely impact upon landscapes attributed with a High Amenity Zoning Objective - or upon Protected Views or Prospects - shall be accompanied by an assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development, including photomontages – demonstrating that landscape impacts have been anticipated and avoided to a level consistent with the sensitivity of the landscape.*

#### Public Rights of Way

There is an established Public Right of Way through the wooded area south of Fernhill, described in the Development Plan as linking Ballyedmonduff Road to Burrow Road via Walsh's Wood (Map 9). It is an objective of the Council to secure the retention of such established public rights-of-way.

As set out in Appendix 8, Policy LHB14 of the Development Plan seeks to:

- Preserve, protect, promote and improve for the common good all existing public rights-of-way which contribute to general amenity.
- Create new rights-of-way or extend or enhance existing rights-of-way either by agreement with landowners or through the use of compulsory powers in the interest of ensuring access to amenities, including the coast, upland areas, river banks, heritage sites and National Monuments
- Create rights-of-way to provide linkages from the built up areas to the countryside and the coast
- Prohibit development and keep free from obstruction existing rights-of-way, and to take legal action if necessary, to prevent any attempt to close them off.
- Prohibit development which would prejudice public access to existing rights-of-way, unless the level of amenity is maintained by the right of way, footpath, or bridleway being diverted by the minimum practical distance and the route continues to be segregated from vehicular traffic
- Consider favourably planning applications which include proposals to improve the condition and appearance of existing rights-of-way.

#### Green County Strategy

The landscape, heritage and biodiversity of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is recognised in the Development Plan as representing some of the most important intrinsic assets of the County.

**Vision Statement:** *To promote and develop a coherent and integrated green infrastructure network across Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown which will secure and enhance biodiversity - including the protection of Natura 2000 sites - provide readily accessible parks, open spaces and recreational facilities, maintain historic and landscape character areas and provide for the sustainable management of water through facilitating the retention and development of a network of green spaces in urban and countryside locations to serve the needs of all citizens and communities in the County.*

Of particular relevance to Fernhill House, the Strategic Vision includes the following key issues facing the County:

- Recognising the close relationship between the landscape, natural heritage and recreational open spaces. The distribution of landscape, natural heritage and recreational assets across the County are vitally important to creating an accessible County. The entire population of the County should have access to nature, parks and strategic public open space.
- The creation of a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' to help manage the future landscape of the County giving due regard to recreation, biodiversity, built and archaeological heritage.

#### Landscape Character

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown contains significant areas of landscape importance. The retention and protection of these areas is particularly critical given the established built-up nature of the majority of the County and the continuing pattern of densification and intensification. There is a clear presumption in favour of conserving, maintaining and enhancing the landscape character of the County to enable those living and working within, and those visiting, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to reap the benefits of the high quality environment and the leisure and recreation amenities which this landscape facilitates and offers.

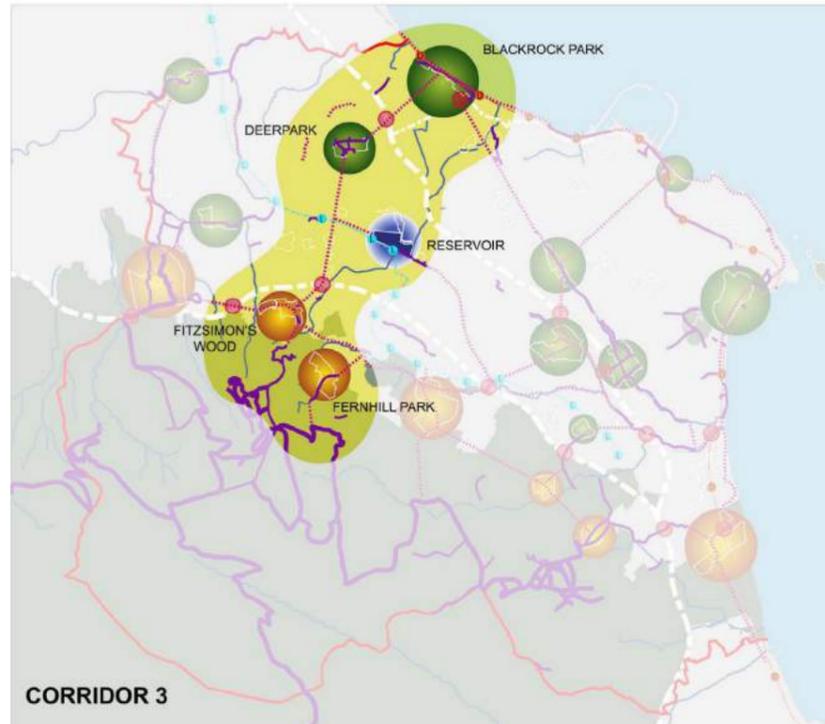
Policy LHB2 of the Development Plan sets out the Council's commitment to the Preservation of these Landscape Character Areas:

*It is Council policy to continue to preserve and enhance the character of the County's landscapes in accordance with the recommended strategies as originally outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment (2002 and since updated).*

For further description of Landscape Character refer Section 3.1.

# 2. Site Context

## 2.1 Planning Background

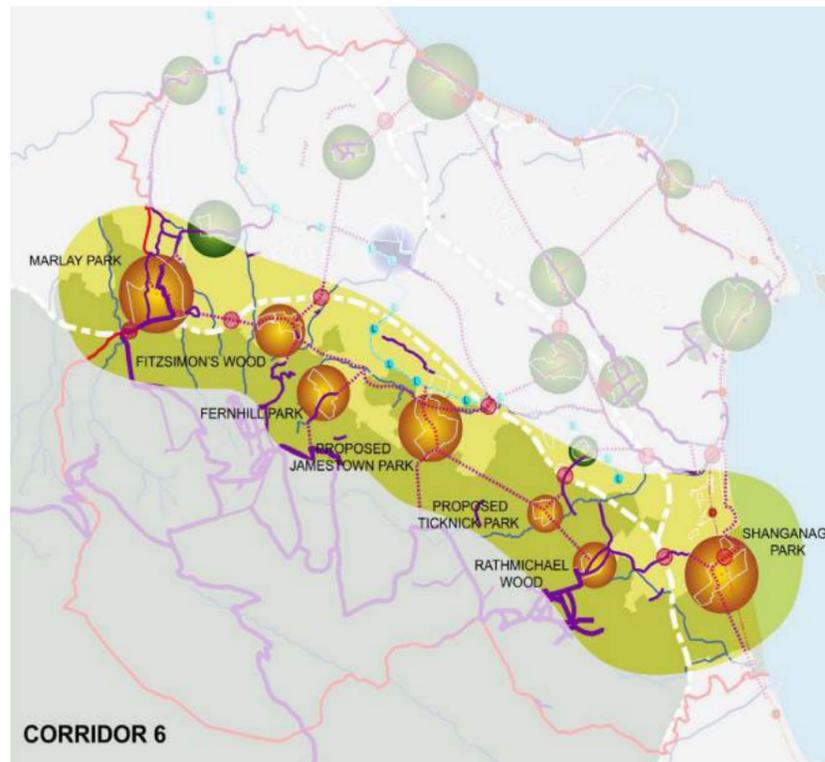


### Corridor 3 - Blackrock to the Mountains *Blackrock Park – Deerpark – FitzSimon's Wood – Fernhill Park*

This corridor runs between the regional Blackrock Park and the Dublin Mountains. This provides residents or visitors with opportunities to connect from the urban area of the County to the coast or to the mountains.

#### Objectives

1. To provide a multifunctional GI corridor connecting the mountain, urban area and the coast.
2. Enhance the utilisation of FitzSimon's Wood as a gateway into the mountains.
3. To develop Fernhill Gardens into a Gateway Park/Regional Park



### Corridor 6 - Gateway Parks *Marlay Park – FitzSimon's Wood – Fernhill Park – proposed Jamestown Park – proposed Ticknick Park – Rathmichael Wood – Shanganagh Park*

These enhanced parks and links act as a transition between the rural and urban landscapes. They are made of 7 parks or transitional open spaces. This is an ambitious but exciting Green Infrastructure corridor. Significant enhancement and development of existing and proposed parks are a feature of this corridor. Similarly Greenways identified in the Cycle Network Plan will need to be brought forward in order to complete the corridor and link these transitional parks.

The transitional or Gateway Parks are to provide access points to and from the mountains and open space above the urban area of the County. Linkages to other main GI corridors also ensure that sustainable travel options are available for those who want to venture beyond the 'park' environment not only from within the County, but from a wider regional catchment. These gateway parks will have formal and informal spaces, less managed but habitat rich areas and then access onto the mountains for those who are prepared for a longer recreational activity.

#### Objectives

1. To provide transitional gateways to the mountains and open spaces from the urban areas of the County.
2. Ensure that sustainable travel options are supported by the wider GI network.
3. To connect a chain of existing and proposed parks and open spaces along the urban fringe, providing variety of recreational and visitor experiences.
4. Ensure the cultural heritage assets are incorporated in the GI assets associated with these gateway parks.
5. To develop Fernhill Gardens into a Gateway Park/Regional Park.

### Green Infrastructure

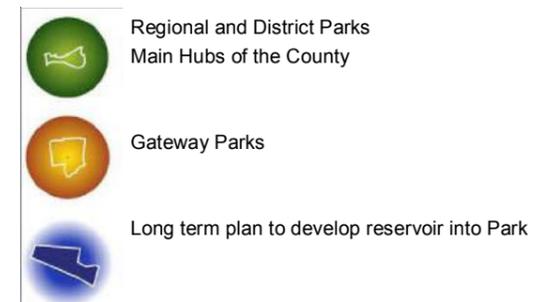
The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, Appendix 14 of the Development Plan<sup>(2)</sup>, seeks to provide a vision and a framework to help identify, protect, promote and enhance the GI assets in the urban, rural and coastal environments of the County, and is intended to guide key aspects of planning policy and County and local level.

The benefits of GI are recognised as being many, such as improving health and wellbeing through new and improved recreation and better local walking and cycling connections; enhancing social cohesion; protecting, managing and enhancing biodiversity; reinforcing sense of place, and improving water quality and management. GI can also provide potential economic benefits through enhanced opportunities for tourism and local business activities.

The spatial framework identifies the Fernhill Estate as forming an integral part of two GI corridors, linking the mountains, urban area and the coast and providing one of several strategic 'gateway hubs':

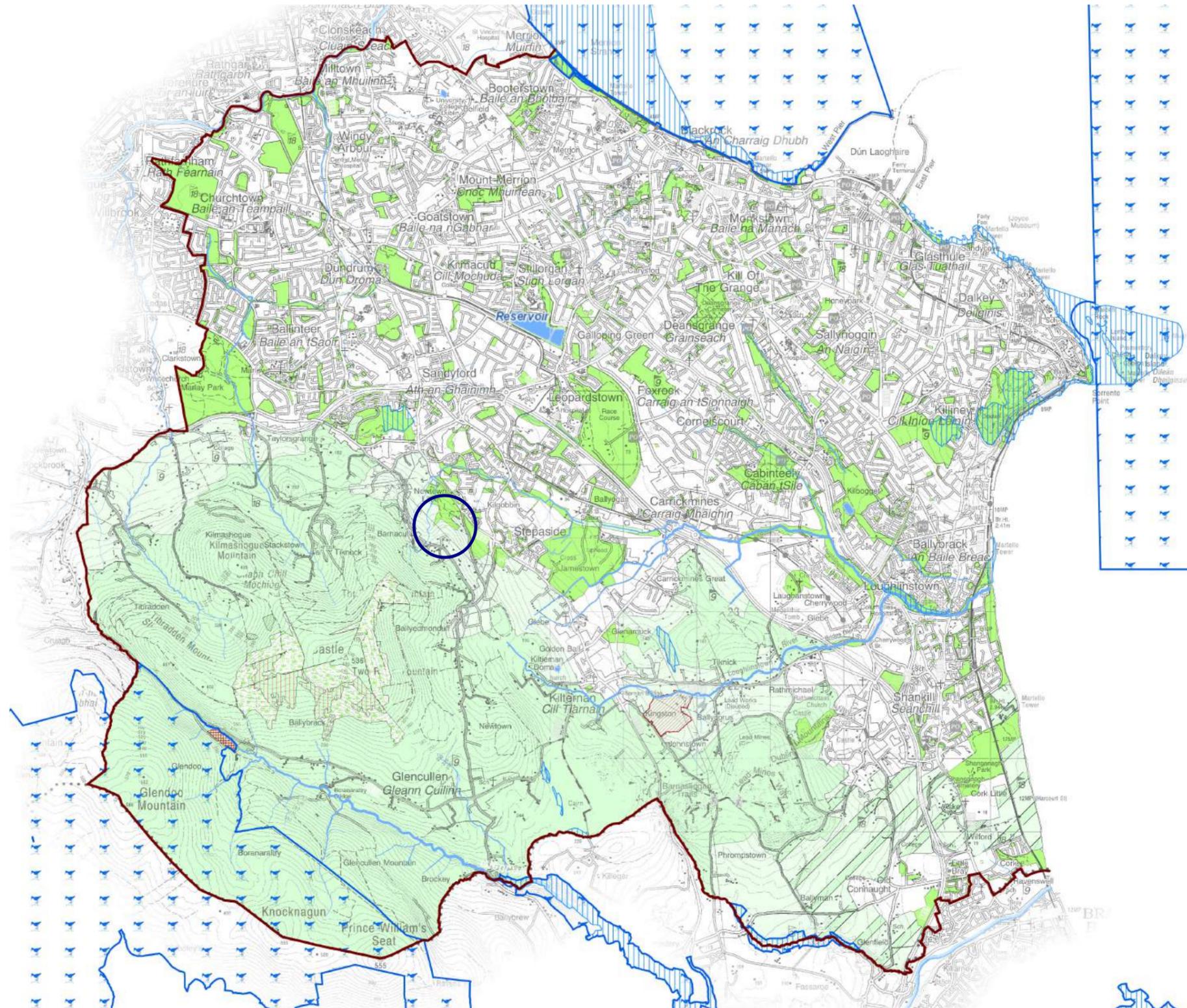
*Development of Fernhill Gardens into a Gateway Park / Regional Park will provide a variety of amenities for the County while also providing opportunities for residents or visitors to connect from the urban area of the County with the mountains.*

#### KEY TO GI CORRIDOR PLANS



# 2. Site Context

## 2.1 Planning Background



Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2016-2022: Ecological Network Map

### Ecological Network Map

The Development Plan seeks to improve the overall ecological template in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown by enhancing connectivity between small fragmented areas. The emerging Ecological Network includes sites supporting habitats and species of International, National, County and local conservation value and that make a significant contribution to the 'Green Network' of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

As shown on the adjoining plan, the Network includes:

- Designated sites (SACs, SPAs and pNHAs).
- Non-designated sites of high nature conservation value (i.e. non-designated sites of National/County importance supporting Annex I habitats, Annex II species, rare and protected flora and high quality semi-natural habitats important at the County level).
- Non-designated sites of local conservation value (public parks, smaller local woodlands etc).

While there are similarities in the process of developing the Ecological Network and the Green Network as outlined in the Open Space hierarchy (Section 2.2 of this study), the primary difference between the two is that the Ecological Network is focused on biodiversity issues whilst the Green Network includes recreational elements and functions.

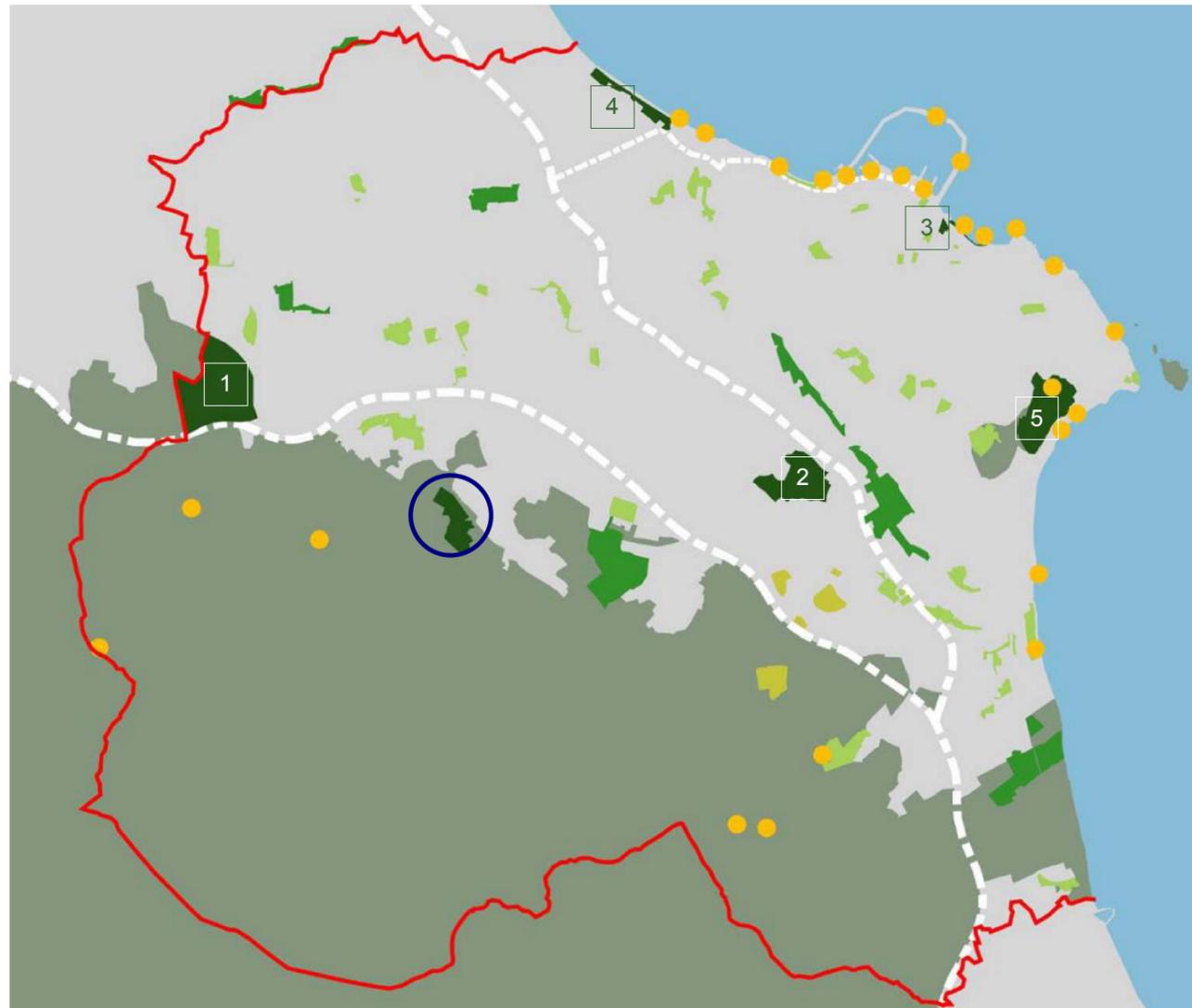
The Fernhill Estate is identified on the Ecological Network Map as Objective F: *To preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities.*

### KEY TO ECOLOGICAL NETWORK MAP

- Natura 2000 Sites
- Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)
- Objective B: To protect and improve rural amenity and to provide for development of agriculture
- Objective F: To preserve and provide for open space with ancillary active recreational amenities
- Objective G: To protect and improve high amenity areas
- Objective GB: To protect and enhance the open nature of lands between urban areas

# 2. Site Context

## 2.2 County Open Space Strategy



*Fernhill in relation to other Regional Parks*

### Open Space Provision

Within Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown there is a hierarchy of quality parks and public open spaces which vary in size and nature and are designed to serve the needs of all members of the community by being readily accessible and at a convenient distance from their home and/or places of work.

Open space provision is generally within the desired distance of all high-density residential areas with the exception of the Sandyford/Stillorgan electoral area where there is a minor deficit. It is intended that this will be addressed in the future with the development of the Public Open Space at Blackthorn Park, Sandyford Business District Civic Park and with Fernhill Park as a Regional Park.

There are around 63 parks and 337 open spaces identified within the urban area of the County. These range in size from large suburban public parks to local pocket parks and squares. There is also a hierarchy of open spaces from regional parks, district parks, local parks, amenity open space and civic open space.

It is an objective of the Development Plan to develop Fernhill Gardens into a Regional Park with consideration given to providing all the amenities associated with a major park, such as pitches, playground, ponds, paths, car park etc., over the period of the Plan (2016-2022).

### Regional Parks

The five existing Regional Parks within the County are:

- Marlay Demesne
- Cabinteely Park
- The Peoples Park and Seafront, Dún Laoghaire
- Blackrock Park
- Killiney Hill Park

These are recognised as the premier parks in the County, providing for a wide range of uses and attractions and opportunities for both high quality active and passive recreation. They are generally large in size (apart from the Peoples Park in Dún Laoghaire).

The Regional Parks each have a unique character and theme, which provide an attraction for visitors and tourists. A park is designated a Regional Park when it attains specific attributes that include being a high profile, high quality park with a range of visitor attractions and facilities, including toilets, car parking and play areas. They may also accommodate food and craft markets and cafes/tea rooms where appropriate.

### Marlay Demesne

Marlay Park is one of the most popular regional parks in the county, surrounded by residential areas and in easy access of public transport. It comprises an extensive 100ha demesne with many important historic features that include a restored Georgian House, courtyards and a Regency walled garden, set within a planned landscape of sweeping informal lawns, fine old trees, mature woodland and a number of large ponds.

The park caters for various sporting activities, such as football, soccer, tennis, par-3 golf, cricket, orienteering and running. It also has children's play facilities, cycle paths and woodland trails (including the start of the Wicklow Way), and a miniature Railway (Saturdays in summer).



*Marlay House*

# 2. Site Context

## 2.2 County Open Space Strategy



Marlay Park farmers market



Marlay Park - start/end of the Wicklow Way



Cabinteely playground

Marlay House is open to the public at particular times of each season for organised tours and events. There are a number of small craft industries located in the adjacent courtyard. Marlay also hosts a very popular farmers market every Saturday and Sunday.

### **Cabinteely Park**

Cabinteely Park comprises an 18<sup>th</sup> century Demesne house, just off the N11 dual carriageway, set in parkland of 45 hectares which is a fine example of the less formal 18th Century English Landscape style.

The House is available for guided tours and corporate or community events. Within the courtyards, a former grain store has been refurbished and is now used for the promotion and development of Youth Arts in the County, while the stables have been converted tea rooms with an adjoining Japanese-style garden.

Within the expansive grounds, there is a multi-use adventure playground, playing pitches and a trim trail.

### **The People's Park**

Located near Dún Laoghaire town centre and next to the Seafront, the People's Park was developed towards the end of the 19th century in the formal Victorian style. It has a fine collection of heritage buildings and structures, including a tearoom, gate lodge, a bandstand and fountains, enclosed on two sides by formal stonewalls and piers with ornate wrought iron railings and gates.

Although relatively small in size (1.58ha), it has one of the highest footfalls of any park in the County. Facilities cater for an increasing number of events in the park, including a popular Farmers Market.

The People's Park was subject to significant restoration and upgrade works between 2013 and 2015. The park has been restored to its historic layout as faithfully as possible while adding sensitive contemporary interventions for modern day requirements.

The elegant simplicity of the original design has re-established the main north south axis which connects and highlights the main features, particularly the central spine reclaimed where the DART line once cut the park off from the seafront - this area has been conceived as a raised promenade with prominent views over the park and the coastline.



The People's Park fountain and gardens

### **Blackrock Park**

This 12ha Park is a pleasant green area overlooking Dublin Bay and developed to a traditional Victorian layout that includes a lake, a central bandstand and gently undulating paths along the seafront.

There are also two well-equipped children's playgrounds, a cycle path and new tree planting. A small car park is located by the main entrance to the park from Rock Road, and a secondary pedestrian entrance from a walkway beside the Blackrock Dart Station.

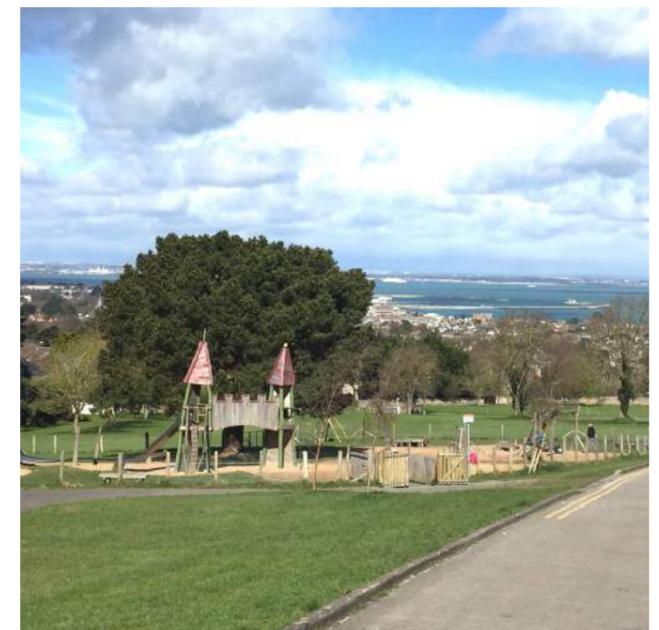


Blackrock Park lake

### **Killiney Hill Park**

Killiney Hill Park is located on the south side of Dublin Bay with slopes down to the shore. From the summit there are panoramic views over the surrounding areas and the Irish Sea.

The park is popular with walkers and there is a network of paths through the woodland with mixed species of native trees. There is a well-equipped adventure play area close to the car park.



Killiney Hill Park play area

# 2. Site Context

## 2.2 County Open Space Strategy

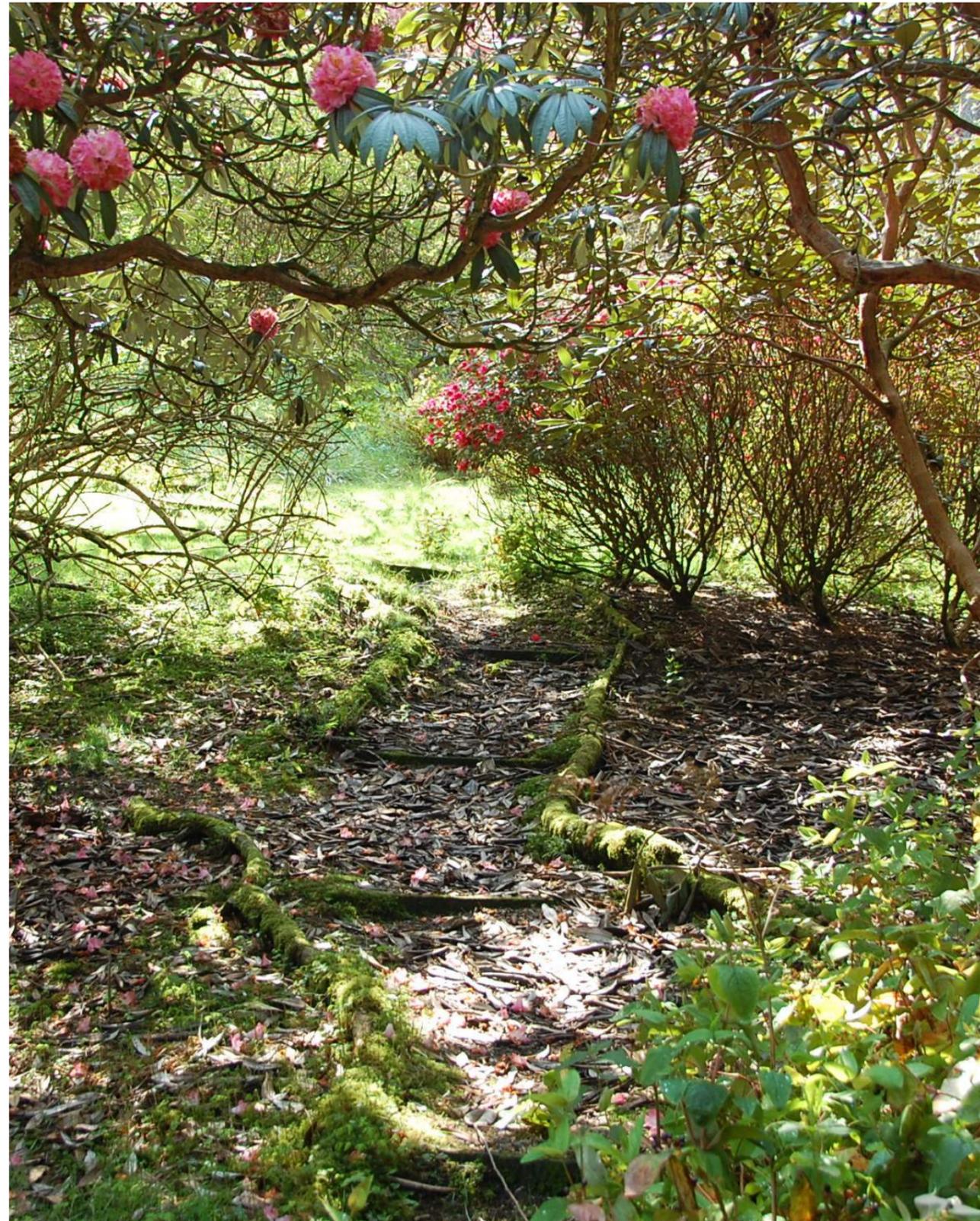


Cabinteely House tea room

### Summary Facilities - Existing Regional Parks

Regional Parks		Marlay Park	Cabinteely Park	People's Park	Blackrock Park	Killiney Park
General	Size (ha)	100	45	1.6	12	34
	Parking (approx. spaces)	490	210	-	22	85
	Toilets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Coffee/Tea Shop	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
	Playground	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Walking paths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Dog runs	✓	✓	-	-	-
	Cycle Paths	✓	-	-	✓	-
	Trim trail	✓	✓	-	✓	-
	Miniature Railway	✓	-	-	-	-
	Historical features	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Sporting Facilities	GAA pitches	✓	✓	-	-
Soccer pitches		✓	✓	-	-	-
All-weather pitch		✓	-	-	-	-
Tennis Courts		✓	-	-	-	-
Cricket ground		✓	-	-	-	-
Dressing rooms		✓	-	-	-	-
Golf		✓	-	-	-	-
Events/Functions	Wedding receptions	✓	-	-	-	-
	Outdoor market	✓	-	✓	-	-
	Outdoor concert venue	✓	-	-	-	-
	Indoor venue	✓	-	-	-	-

# 3. Site Appraisal



- 3.1 Landscape Character
- 3.2 Access and Movement
- 3.3 Existing Site Features
- 3.4 Landform Characteristics
- 3.5 Ecology
- 3.6 Arboriculture
- 3.7 Ground Investigations
- 3.8 Utilities

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.1 Landscape Character

### DLR Landscape Character Assessment

Fernhill House and Gardens form an important component of the historic landscape on the fringe of Dublin City. The character of the estate is distinguished by its ornamental and native woodland, rockery, water features and kitchen gardens, interspersed with exotic trees and shrubs collected from throughout the temperate world.

The designed landscape is complemented by the historic structures of the main house and outbuildings, and the whole has been sensitively maintained to present a unique cultural asset juxtaposed between the contrasting landscapes of the metropolitan fringe and the mountains.

The county contains many other such areas of special landscape character and the Development Plan stresses that their retention and protection is particularly important given the established built-up nature of the majority of the county and the continuing pattern of densification and intensification.

Policy LHB2 of the Development Plan sets out the Council's commitment to the Preservation of these Landscape Character Areas:

*It is Council policy to continue to preserve and enhance the character of the County's landscapes in accordance with the recommended strategies as originally outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment (2002 and since updated).*

The Landscape Character Assessment for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown<sup>(6)</sup> divides the County into 14 Landscape Character Areas. Although not specifically referred to in the assessment, the Fernhill Estate is located within the Barnacullia Landscape Character Area 9, which is described as:

*This enclosure encompasses the elevated slopes rising from Stepside village up towards Three Rock Mountain. Three of the boundaries are man made features – the roadway, the plantation forest and the edge of the built up area of the city. The enclosure can*

*be almost subdivided into two separate enclosures by the Barnacullia Road. To the west of this road the land slopes steeply upwards to the summit of Three Rock Mountain. The most significant feature is the granite quarry which is clearly visible from a number of viewpoints within the County and from 2 kilometres off shore in Dublin Bay.*

*One-off housing is dotted up the mountainside with almost continuous ribbon development along the road. To the east of the Barnacullia Road the landscape is gentler in slope and characterised by irregular fields broken up by deciduous tree belts. One-off housing is again prevalent along the lower side of the roadway although views down the valley are currently protected. The noise of traffic in Sandyford Village is audible and a line of large pylons traverses the enclosure. This enclosure also includes the area containing the pNHA Fitzsimons Wood which occupies an area of approximately 8 hectares near Lamb's Cross.*

The Sensitivity/Strategy for this Character Area is described in the assessment as:

- *The area has already absorbed considerable residential development along its main routeways. At present the Enniskerry Road R117 acts as a boundary between urban and rural developments as the land begins to rise steeply to the west of this roadway.*
- *The impact of any further pylon schemes on the landscape shall be carefully assessed.*
- *Any new residential development shall maintain the rural character of the area and should not be obtrusive on the horizon.*
- *The impact of further extractive industries on the elevated slopes of Three Rock shall be carefully assessed.*
- *Possible road improvement schemes including the Stepside Relief Road shall not adversely affect hedgerows and walls.*
- *To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Barnacullia.*

Between the upper slopes, extending westwards from the Barnacullia Road, and the edge of the built-up area as defined by the Enniskerry Road, lies the Fernhill Estate together with other non-intensive uses such as Rosemont School, the Burrow Golf Course and Sandyford Par 3 Golf.

The foothills are characterised by irregular fields used mostly for grazing, defined by hedgerows and interspersed with large clumps of mature deciduous and conifer woodlands.

One-off housing is prevalent in the mid-levels, along the Barnacullia/Ballyedmonduff Road, and exerts a suburban influence on the landscape. Remnant quarries and high voltage overhead power lines further detract from the rural character.

To the east of the Enniskerry Road are the expansive new residential developments of Belarmine and The Rectory.



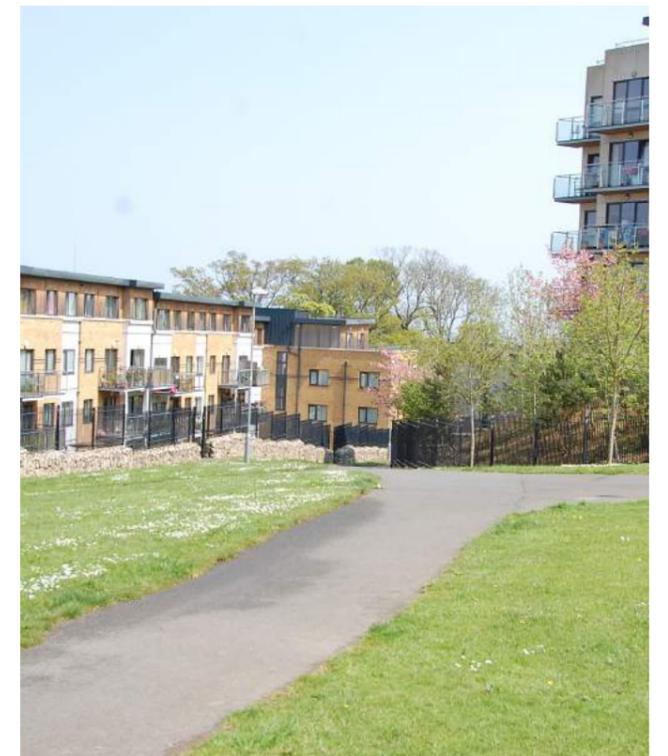
General landscape character west of the foothills



The Fernhill out-buildings are screened by the landscape



View of Rosemont School to northern edge of Fernhill



New residential development to the east of Fernhill

# 3. Site Appraisal

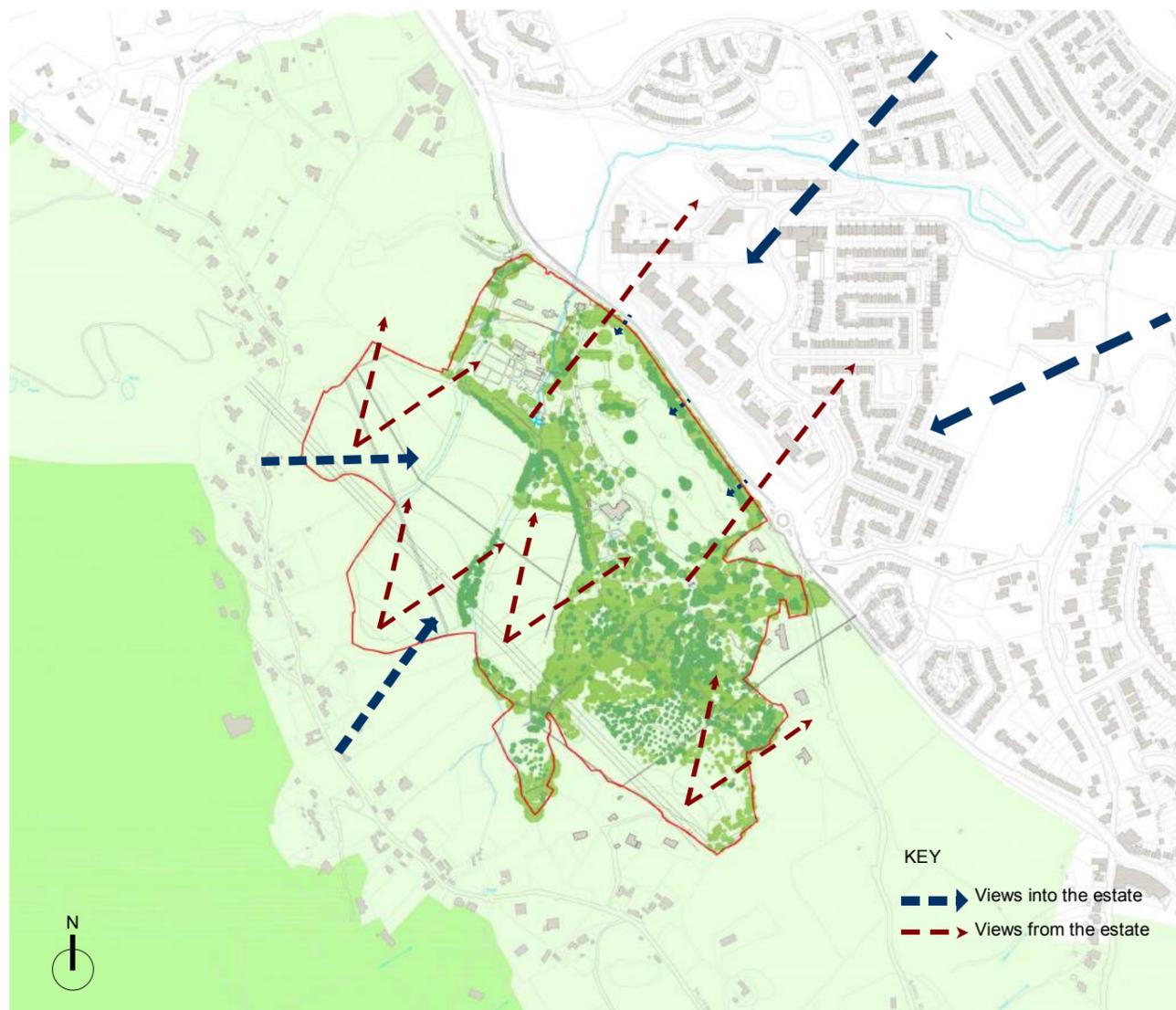
## 3.1 Landscape Character



Three Rock Mountain from the urban fringe



Views to Fernhill from the Enniskerry Road are mostly obscured by the boundary wall and perimeter trees



Views to and from the Fernhill Estate

### Visual Characteristics

The special visual character of Fernhill derives from its designed landscape situated on the metropolitan fringe and set against a backdrop of the Dublin Mountains. To the south-west of the estate, the higher slopes of Kilmashogue, Three Rock and Two Rock Mountains are prominent in views from most parts of the urban area and reinforce a clear distinction between town and countryside.

Views of the larger woodland trees of the estate are also widely visible from the built-up area and contribute significantly to the transitional character of the foothills landscape.

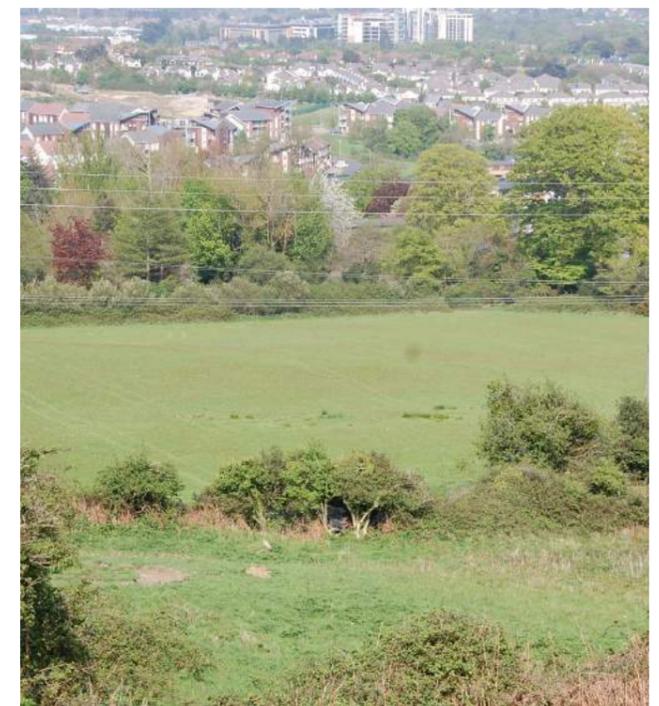
From the Ballyedmonduff Road there are views of the western fields of the estate and the overhead cables. Views of the estate buildings, however, remain screened to view by the woodland planting and the localised topography. Similarly, from the Enniskerry Road, views of the estate are mostly limited to glimpses through the boundary wall and the perimeter shelter belt. The main house and outbuildings remain effectively absorbed by the landscape features.

From within the estate there are occasional framed views eastwards across the metropolitan area, especially from the northern fields, the kitchen garden and the midway plantation. There is also a panoramic view of the urban area and Dublin Bay from the highest south-western part of the site.

To the south-west of the estate, from the mountain tops and the mid-levels, there are similar panoramic views of Dublin Bay and the metropolitan area. It is an objective of the Development Plan (Policy LHB6: Views and Prospects) to protect and encourage the enjoyment of such views and prospects, and to:

- Prevent development which would block, or otherwise interfere, with a View which is designated for protection.
- Preserve the Prospects listed in the Plan.

Although there are no Prospects identified in the immediate vicinity of Fernhill, the views to be preserved include those from the length of the Barnacullia/ Ballyedmonduff Road, as well as views of Three Rock Mountain and Two Rock Mountain from the Enniskerry Road (Sandyford-Kiltiernan area) and Sandyford Village.



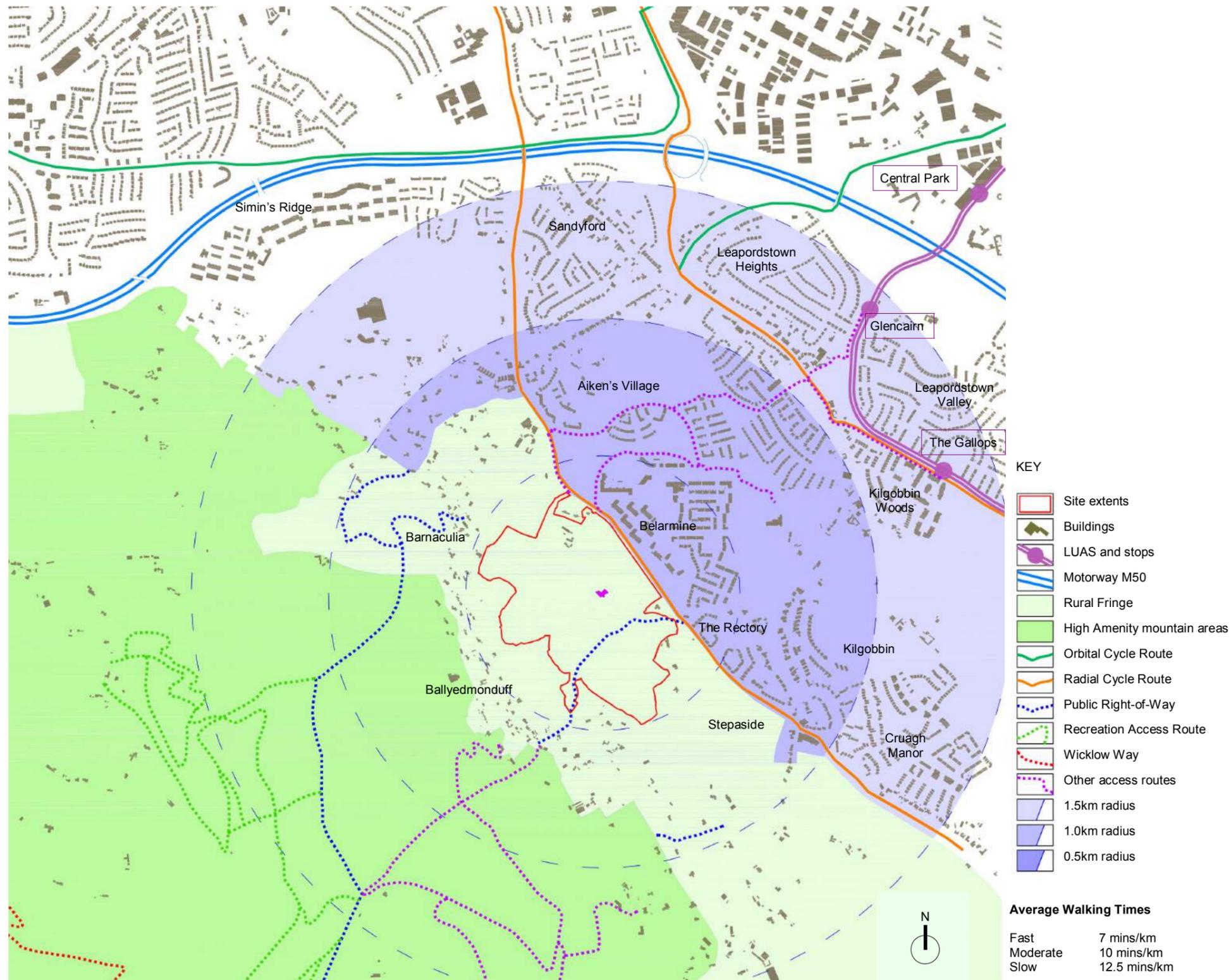
General view of the estate and the Metropolitan urban fringe from the Ballyedmonduff Road



Mature woodland on lower slopes of the estate provide an important visual backdrop to the urban fringe

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.2 Access and Movement



Site accessibility

### Site Catchment

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County is located between the outer suburbs of Dublin City and the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains. Its population is 206,261 (2011 Census).

The Fernhill estate is located within the Electoral Area Boundary of Glencullen-Sandyford, with a population of 36,465 and containing both city and rural areas - Sandyford, Stepside, Kiltiernan, Glencullen, Leopardstown and parts of Cabinteely, Ballinteer and Dundrum. According to Population Change between 1991-2011, the area is identified as subject to High Growth (+100-300%). The current population within a 1km radius of the site is estimated at 3,440.

Within 0.5km to 1.5km distance of the estate (approx. 5-20 minutes walking distance) are both established and new residential areas, as well as the outdoor recreation opportunities of the Dublin Mountains.

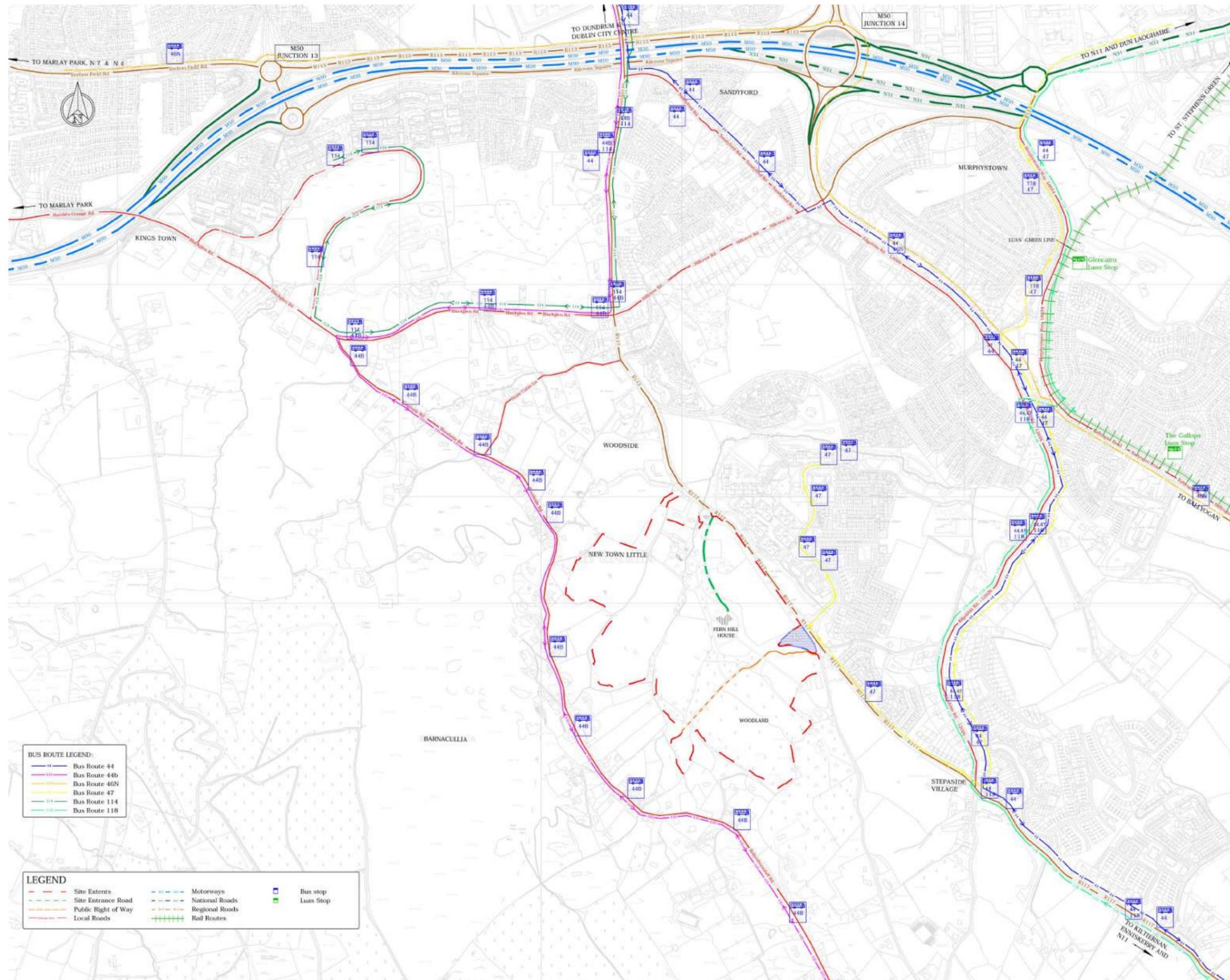
There are two LUAS Stops (Glencairn and the Gallops) within 15-20 minutes walking distance. From the Glencairn Luas stop, the route follows the old Murphystown Road and passes through the Sandyford Hall residential estate and along Aiken's Village Road to the junction with Enniskerry Road. The route from The Gallops stop follows the Ballyogan Road and Kilgobbin Road northwards to the junction with the Sandyford Hall route.

There are also cycle lanes along sections of the Enniskerry Road in the vicinity of Fernhill. A proposed Radial Cycle Route extends from the City Centre along the Enniskerry Road, adjoining the eastern boundary of Fernhill, and a second Route follows the Ballyogan Road to the Gallops LUAS stop.

The Public Right-of-Way crossing the southern part of Fernhill provides important walker access from the urban area to the upland access routes and, eventually, to the Wicklow Way.

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.2 Access and Movement



Public transport and roads infrastructure

### Public Transport and Roads Infrastructure

As noted in the Preliminary Engineering Report<sup>(7)</sup>:

#### Bus

The Stepside area is serviced by several bus routes running to and from the city centre. The nearest of which runs from the Bellarmine housing development adjacent to Fernhill, through Stepside village.

#### LUAS

There are two light rail stops within walking distance of Fernhill. These are The Glencairn and Gallops stops on the Murphystown Way and Ballyogan roads respectively. Bus services from Bellarmine and Stepside also serve the Glencairn LUAS stop.

#### Roads

The adjoining plan highlights the trunk and arterial roads adjacent to Fernhill, including the M50 motorway, regional and local roads. The estate is well positioned in relation to this network, and a short drive from junction 13/14 of the M50 motorway.

#### Pedestrians and Cyclists

It is likely that pedestrian access to Fernhill will be along the Enniskerry Road. A footpath is currently provided to the eastern side of this road. As such pedestrian crossings will be required in proximity of the main estate access points.

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.3 Existing Site Features



The main existing uses and features of the Fernhill estate as identified on the adjoining plan include:

1. Main House
2. Stable Yard
3. Kitchen Garden
4. Gate Lodge
5. Car park
6. The Avenue
7. The Meadow
8. The Broadwalk
9. Sweet Chestnut
10. Stream and waterfall
11. Laurel Lawn
12. Midway plantation
13. Public Right-of-Way
14. Tunnel
15. Quarry Walk
16. Top Walk
17. Herd Field
18. Wood Field
19. Nine Acre Field
20. Road Field

Existing Site Features

# 3. Site Appraisal

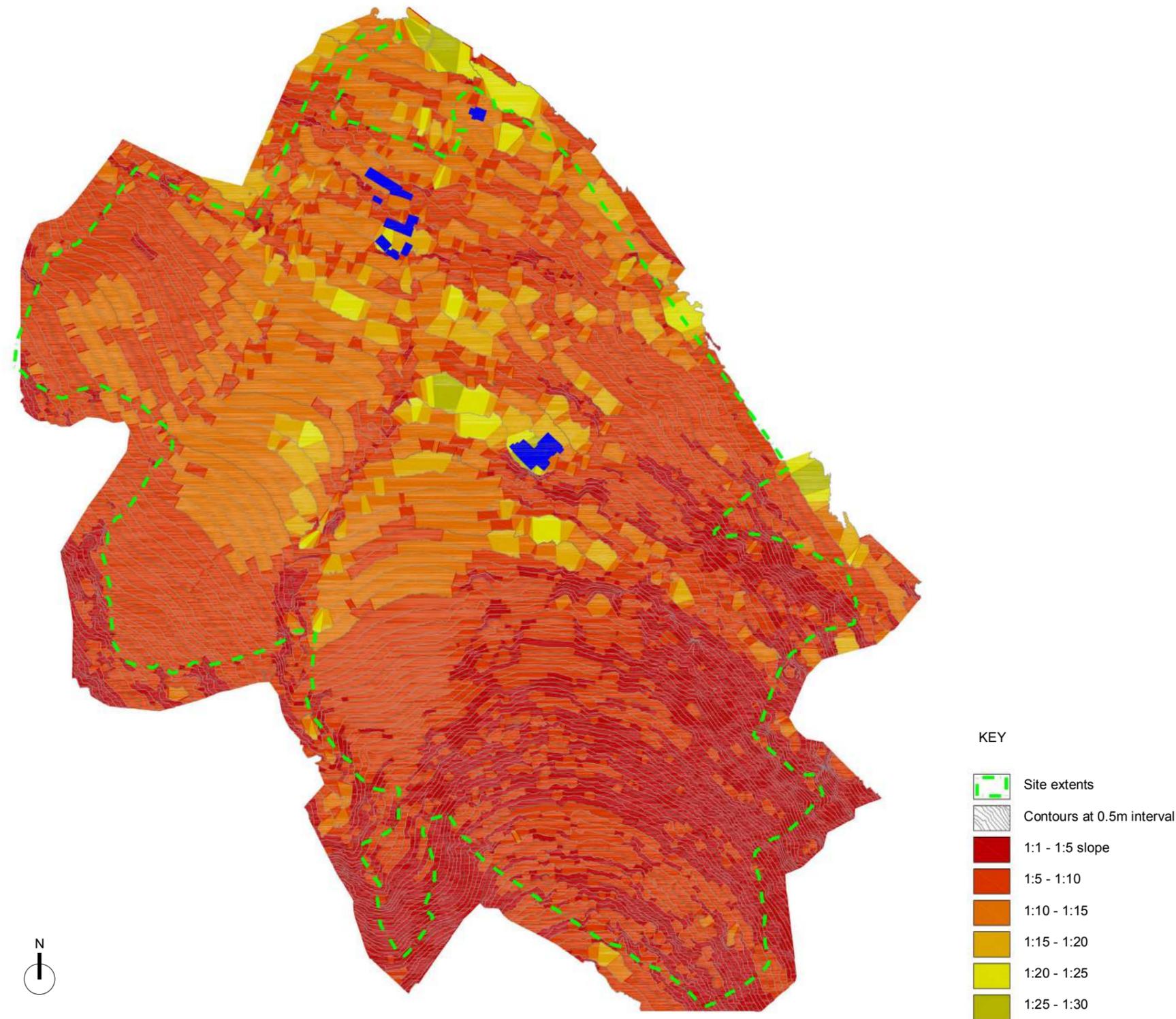
## 3.4 Landform Characteristics

### Gradients

The site slopes generally from south-west to north-east, from +225m (ITM grid and Ordnance Datum (Malin)) to +135m in the north-east corner. A LIDAR contour map of the site was undertaken on behalf of DLRCC in August 2014, and is provided as Appendix C of the Preliminary Engineering Report<sup>(7)</sup>. This was supplemented by a detailed Topographic Survey, included as Appendix D of the Preliminary Engineering report.

As shown by the adjoining gradients map, the land is steepest (<1:5) around the southern and eastern parts of the site, which are mostly heavily wooded. The more open slopes of the upper central fields are generally between 1:10 and 1:15, becoming steeper towards the western boundary. The land around the house and out-buildings varies between 1:10 and 1:25, becoming slightly steeper towards the northern parts of the site.

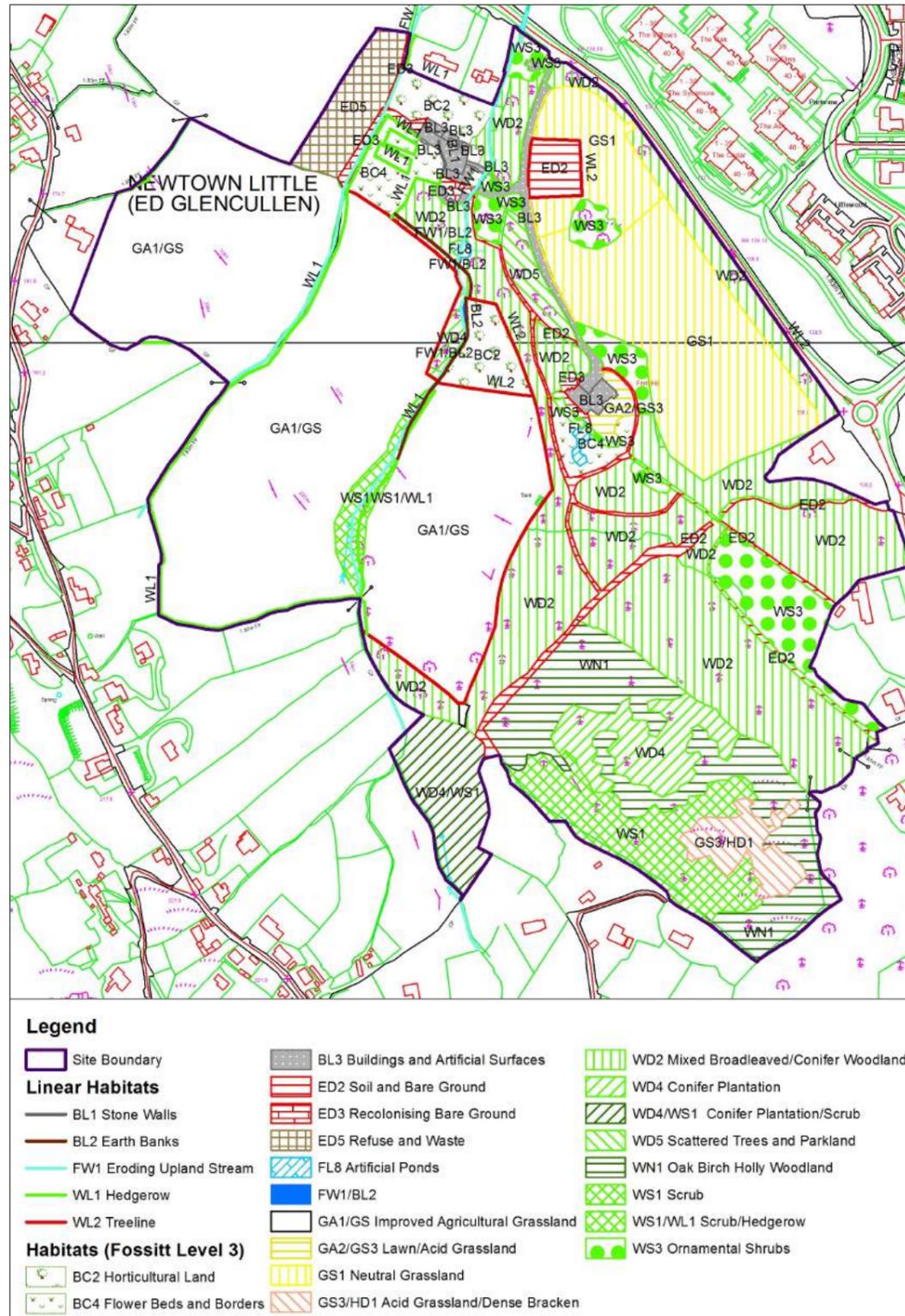
Generally the steepest slopes (<1:10), covering around 60% of the site, will preclude most forms of recreation development without extensive re-modelling of the landform, although this could present some exciting opportunities for smaller scale adventure play. The intermediate slopes, around 20% of the site, could accommodate active recreation provision with suitable landform re-modelling, while the flattest areas (>1:10) that are most suitable for all types of development are limited to the remaining 20% of the site.



Landform Characteristics

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.5 Ecology



Habitat map (to Fossitt Level 3), Ecological Constraints Report (July 2016)

### Fernhill House and Gardens Ecological Constraints Report (July 2016)<sup>(8)</sup>

This report provides an assessment of the ecological importance of Fernhill within the wider landscape. It includes a description of the main habitats and species (or potential species they support) within Fernhill and an assessment of their ecological value in terms of local/regional importance and relevant legislation. An outline of potential ecological issues or threats to the property is presented and recommendations on how the natural ecology can be integrated and managed in a way that enhances the biodiversity of Fernhill while facilitating access and enjoyment by the public.

According to the Ecological Report:  
*The main habitats present within the estate include the house (BL3) and gardens, which are surrounded by mature trees in open parkland (WD5) and mixed broadleaved/conifer woodland (WD2). Two small watercourses which are best described as upland eroding streams (FW1) flow through the property and diverted via a culvert into a series of artificial ponds and pools (FL8) forming a water garden within the rockery and along one of the streams.*

Between the main house and the Enniskerry Road is a large field known as the 'Front Lawn' which has been managed as permanent pasture grazed by cattle for over a century. The report considers this to be:  
*A good example of species rich neutral grassland (GS1) which has never been artificially fertilised, ploughed or reseeded. This forms an extremely rare grassland habitat within the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area as the majority of such pastures have been lost through agricultural intensification and improvements with subsequent losses for species diversity as well as through ongoing urbanisation of the county.*

To the south-west of the house are three other large fields which have been managed for mostly grazing/meadow, and described in the report as agricultural grassland (GA1)/semi-improved grassland (GS).

Elsewhere on the estate:

*The upper slopes of the property were planted in the late 1970s with Scot's pine, Coriscan Pine, European Larch, Norway Spruce, Japanese Larch, Logdepole Pine, Beech and Sitka spruce, and these small conifer plantations (WD4) are in need of intervention and thinning.*

*On the margins of these are areas of scrub (WS3) and some old field systems have become wooded with native oak birch holly woodland (WN1) as grazing with livestock in these areas ceased. In the south east of the property an open area of acid grassland (GS3) remains which has become encroached by dense bracken (HD1), scrub (WS3) and the beginnings of native oak birch holly woodland (WN1) in the absence of grazing.*

The gardens are a mixture of planting of ornamental trees and shrubs (WS3) - refer Section 4.3 of this feasibility report for further details.

### Assessment of Ecological Significance

The report identifies the main ecological interest in Fernhill as being the mosaic of habitats present which include mature trees and woodland, the watercourses and ponds, a variety of grassland habitats, scrub and the buildings, one of which at present contains a confirmed bat roost. Fernhill is also important for its variety of fauna including birds, bats, badgers, deer and other mammals.

In an increasingly urbanised environment Fernhill provides an important feature of biodiversity/green infrastructure within the county connecting the uplands to the coast via two watercourses.

The diversity of planting and variety of species is also likely to be of importance for a variety of pollinators which are sure to find a rich nectar source here throughout the year be it from natural habitats or from cultivated garden species.

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.6 Arboriculture



Tree Survey Key Plan, Arborist Associates Ltd. (August 2016)

Survey trees were individually tagged and categorised in accordance with the cascade chart given in Table 1 of BS 5837:2012:

- Category U** – Those trees in such a condition that any existing value would be lost within 10 years. Most of these will be recommended for removal for reasons of sound Arboricultural practice/management.
- Category A** - Trees of high quality/value with a minimum of 40 years life expectancy.
- Category B** – Trees of moderate quality/value with a minimum of 20 years life expectancy.
- Category C** – Trees of low quality/value with a minimum of 10 years life Expectancy.

The arboricultural data was collected and assessed for all significant trees according to the following:

- Tree Number (metal tags attached to each tree)
- Tree species both common and botanical
- Dimensions (trunk diameter, height, crown spread and crown clearance)
- Age Class
- Physiological Condition
- Structural Condition
- Recommendations
- Estimated remaining contribution within their present environment
- Retention category

### A Condition Assessment of the Larger Trees Located Around the Formal Grounds of Fernhill Estate (August 2016)<sup>(9)</sup>

The assessment included the consideration of almost 760 trees, mainly located around the formal gardens surrounding the house and the usable areas of the grounds.

As noted in the arboricultural report:

*The retention category of the trees has been assessed and categorized according to their quality and value within the existing context, and not in conjunction with any proposed development plans. The objective of the category grading is to identify the quality of the trees so that any proposed development layout can be designed around those trees of most value to these grounds and those that have the best potential to provide the long-term tree cover. In making this assessment, particular consideration was given to:*

**Arboricultural Value** – An assessment of the trees health, structural form, life expectancy, species and its physical contribution to or affects on other features located on site.

**Landscape Value** – An assessment of a trees locality including its contributions to other features as well as to the site as a whole.

**Cultural Value** – additional contributions made such as conservation, historical or commemorative value.

The categorisation of trees assessed is summarised in the Survey as:

Category Grade	Percentage of trees
Category U	12.3%
Category A	9.4%
Category B	38.9%
Category C	39.4%

It is evident from the assessment that a large number of the existing trees are either of moderate or low quality value, and only a small percentage of high quality/value. Also, over 12% of the trees are recommended for removal.

A proactive tree management plan with suitable replacement planting, phased as necessary, will therefore be essential to ensure that the woodland character of Fernhill is retained into the future.

As part of the assessment, a list of remedial tree surgery works required was also undertaken to deal with present health and safety concerns. From the 756 trees assessed, 217 (28.7%) were identified for remedial tree works and prioritised according to risk. The report recommends that once Fernhill is opened fully to the public, it will be necessary to review the trees and the areas around them, and preferably zone the grounds based on usage and undertake the required tree management operations accordingly.

### Champion Trees

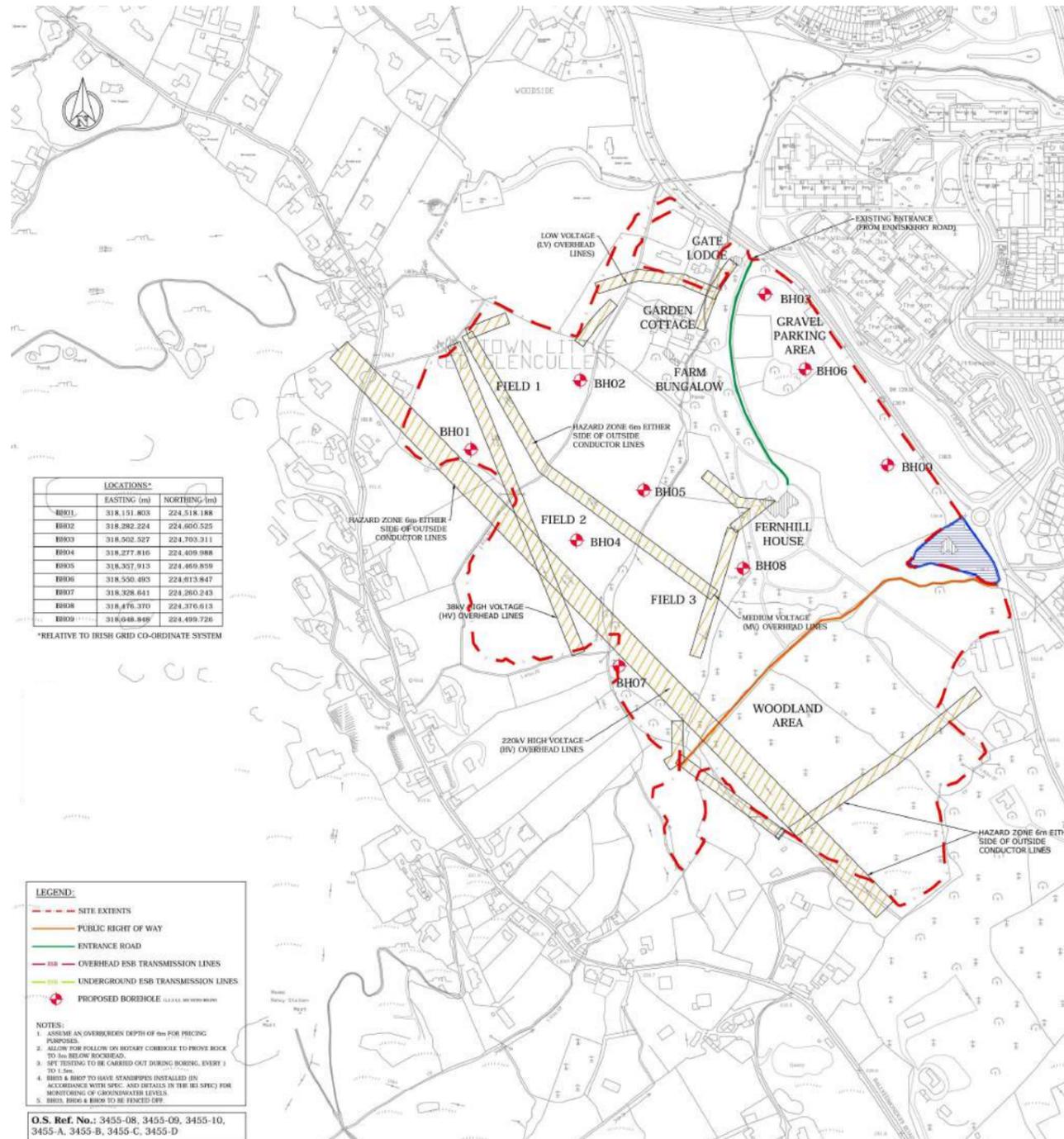
The Fernhill estate contains a large selection of exceptional trees that are recognised as being of national importance as Champion Trees. A 'champion' tree is defined as the tallest or oldest or most massive example of its species or kind in a given region. The publication 'Champion Trees'<sup>(10)</sup> provides details of 1,200 of these remarkable trees, based on a survey carried out by the Tree Register of Ireland on behalf of the Tree Council of Ireland and the Irish Tree Society.

Over 30 such trees were recorded at Fernhill between 1974 and 1990, including fine specimens of:

<i>Abies cephalonica</i>	<i>Larix decidua</i>
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
<i>Acer Hersll</i>	<i>Magnolia cambellii</i>
<i>Acer cappadocicum</i>	<i>Metasequoia glyptostroboides</i>
<i>Acer nikonense</i>	<i>Michelia doltsopa</i>
<i>Athrotaxis selaginoides</i>	<i>Picea smithiana</i>
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
<i>Cedrus deodara</i>	<i>Pinus mesogensis</i>
<i>Cornus contraversa</i>	<i>Quercus pontica</i>
<i>Cornus kousa</i>	<i>Rhododendron arboreum</i>
<i>Cupresses funebris</i>	'Fernhill Silver'
<i>Cupresses macrocarpa</i>	<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>
<i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i>	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>
<i>Eucalyptus spp</i>	

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.7 Ground Investigations



Borehole Location Key Plan

### Ground Investigation Report (September 2016)<sup>(11)</sup>

The purpose of the site investigation was to determine sub-surface conditions utilising a variety of methods in accordance with the project specification. The scope of the work undertaken included:

- Site observation of existing conditions
- 9 No. Cable Percussion boreholes to a maximum depth of 5.7m BGL
- 8 No. Rotary Core Boreholes to a maximum depth of 8.1m BGL
- Installation of 2 No. Groundwater monitoring wells, one with timber fencing
- Geotechnical & Environmental Laboratory testing
- Report with recommendations

Key findings of the investigations included:

#### Ground Conditions

**Topsoil:** Encountered in all the exploratory holes and present to a maximum depth of 0.2m BGL.

**Granular Deposits:** Mostly loose to medium dense brown gravelly clayey fine to coarse sand with some sub angular granite cobbles, at a depth of 0.10m BGL extending to depths of up to 1.0m.

**Cohesive Deposits:** Mostly firm brown or brownish grey slightly silty slightly sandy gravelly clay with occasional sub rounded to sub angular cobbles, with secondary sand and gravel constituents varying across the site and with depth.

The second type of Cohesive deposits encountered between 3.40m and 3.50m BGL in BH01, BH04 and BH05 is described as stiff to very stiff greyish black slightly sandy gravelly clay with some cobbles and boulders.

**Bedrock:** Most of the rotary core boreholes recovered weak to medium strong creamy white medium to coarse micaceous granite.

The depth to bedrock was shown to vary from 0.7m BGL in BH+RC09 to the east of the site to a maximum of 6.6m BGL in BH+RC05 in the centre of the site. No bedrock was encountered in RC01 and RC04. Overall the bedrock appears to become shallow towards the north east and deeper towards the south west.

**pH and sulphate testing:** Completed on samples recovered from the trial pits and indicating pH results as near neutral and the sulphate results as low, when compared to the guideline values from BRE Special Digest 1:2005. No special precautions were considered necessary for concrete foundations to prevent sulphate attack.

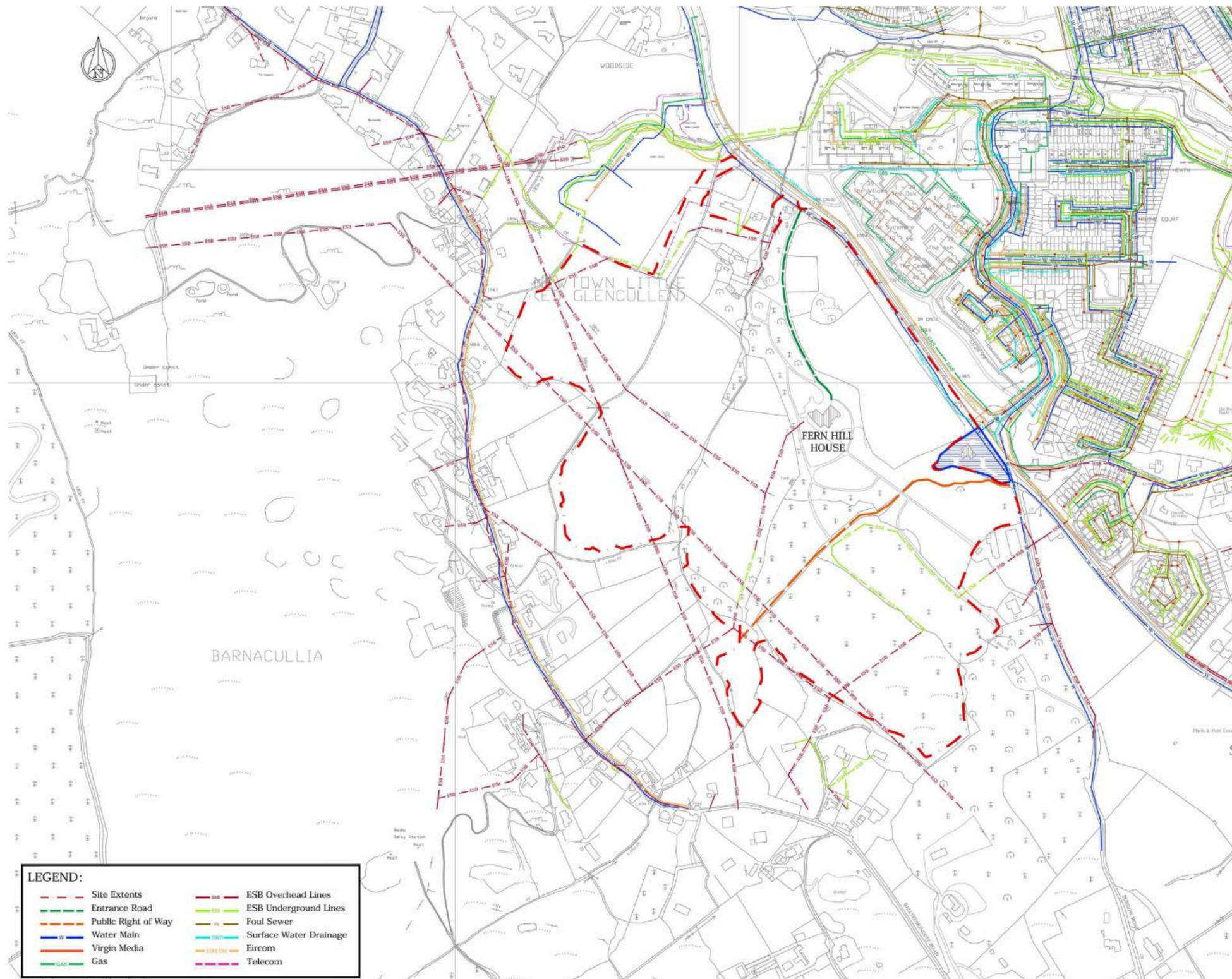
#### Ground Water Conditions

As no groundwater was noted during the initial investigation, standpipes were installed in BH03 and BH07 to allow the equilibrium groundwater level to be determined. This indicates the following water levels in the two locations monitored:

	August	September
BH03	2.82 BGL	2.65 BGL
BH07	1.80 BGL	1.75 BGL

# 3. Site Appraisal

## 3.8 Utilities



Existing Utilities Plan

Refer Preliminary Engineering Report <sup>(7)</sup> for further details.

### Water Supply

The area is served by mains water supply, with a 300mm watermain located along the eastern boundary of the site on the Enniskerry Road.

### Sewerage

Surface water sewerage is located along the length of the Enniskerry Road. There are currently no foul sewers adjacent to the site. The closest sewer line is located to the north-east in the Bellarmine housing development, approximately 130m from the site boundary.

### Electricity

There are overhead ESB lines running through the site at the following locations:

- High voltage (HV) lines across the western portion, mainly located in the agricultural land and running in a NW to SE direction into the woodland area.
- Medium voltage (MV) – either 10kV or 20kV - lines running in the same direction as the HV lines and also crossing the western site boundary.
- A mix of MV and low voltage (LV) overhead lines along the northern boundary and to the structures at this end of the site. These are under-grounded at certain points.
- MV overhead lines entering the southern portion of the site, cross through the woodland area and are subsequently under-grounded to the south of the public right of way.

### Gas

There are no gas mains on the site, however a gas supply is available from the Enniskerry Road to the east of the site.

### Telecommunications

Eircom ducts run along the Enniskerry Road and the local road to the west, serving the dwellings there. Virgin Media ducts also run along the Enniskerry Road.

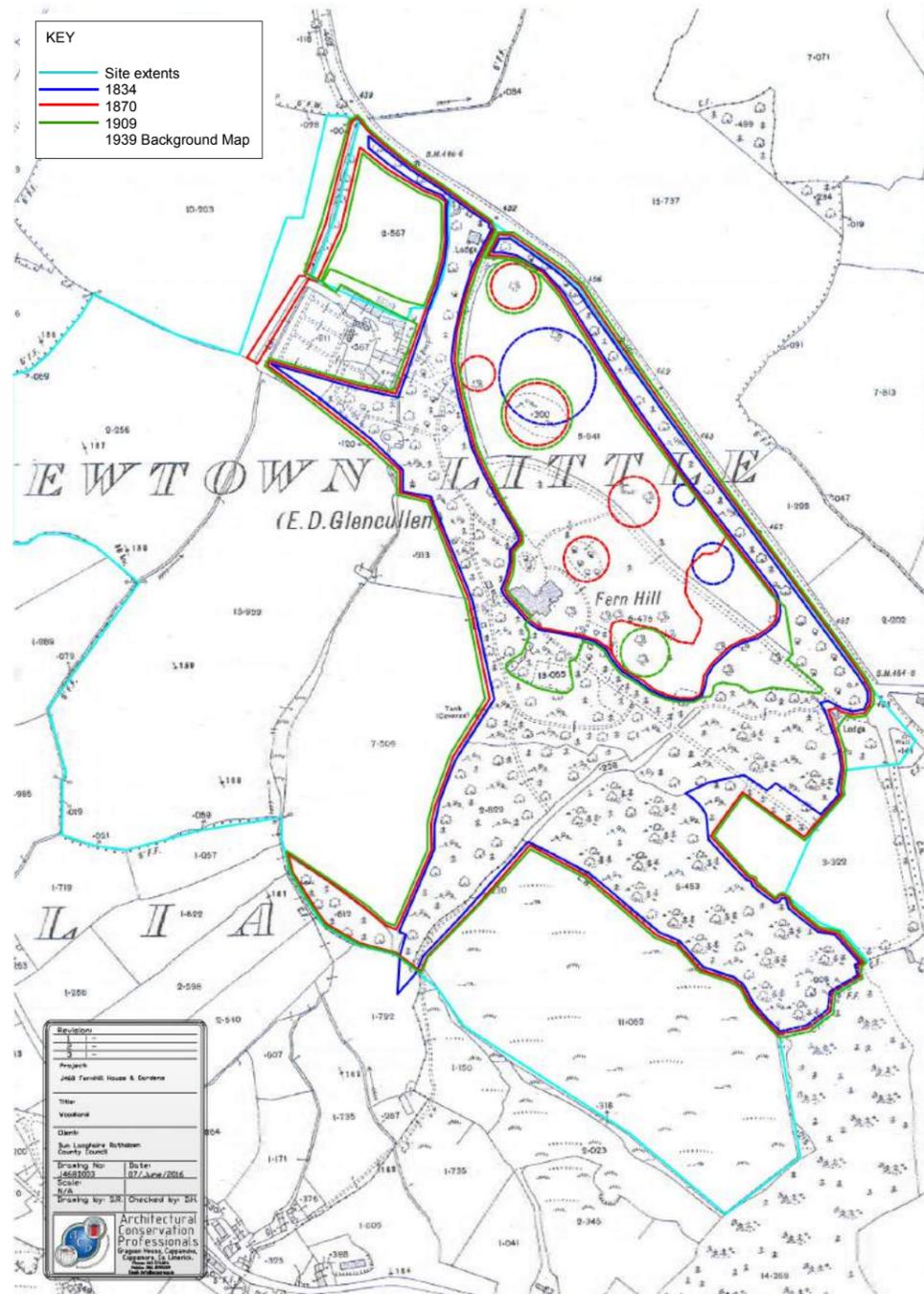
# 4. The House and Gardens



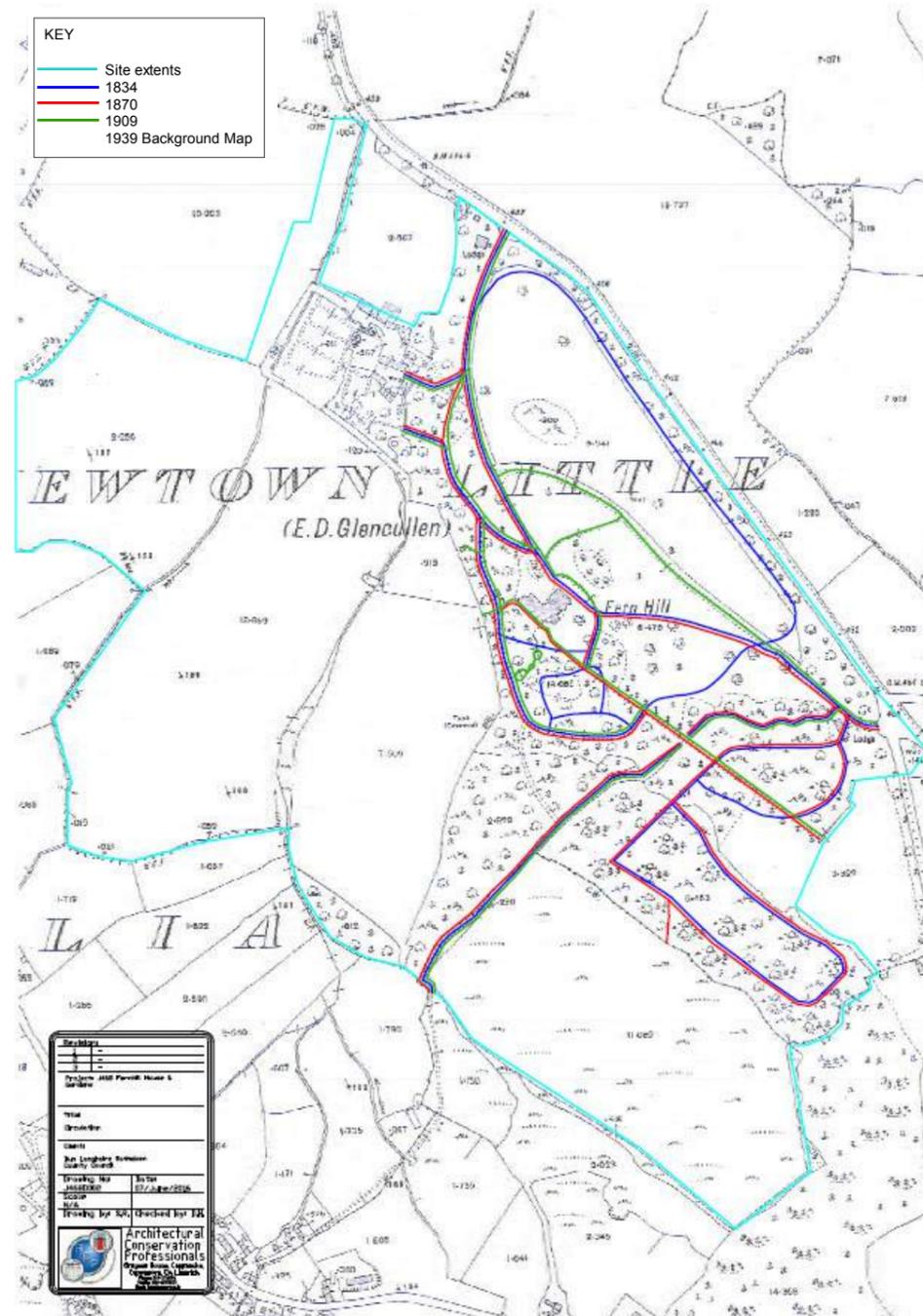
- 4.1 Summary History of the Estate
- 4.2 Fernhill Gardens
- 4.3 Other Designed Landscapes
- 4.4 The Fernhill Buildings
- 4.5 Curtilage and Attendant Grounds

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.1 Summary History of the Estate



Historic Circulation Routes - Map J468D002  
Research Report for Fernhill House and Gardens



Historic Woodland & Specimen Trees - Map J468D003  
Research Report for Fernhill House and Gardens

### Evolution of the Estate

Fernhill is an impressive example of a small country estate, comprising a former substantial family residence with ancillary buildings, surrounded by gardens, parkland, woodland and agricultural land in an elevated location overlooking Dublin Bay.

A detailed account of the history of the estate is presented in the *Research Report for Fernhill House and Gardens*<sup>(12)</sup>.

The original house is known to have been built by Alderman Frederick Darley during the early part of the 19th century - he acquired the lease of the Newtown Little townland in 1815. The land had previously been farmed, and there are records indicating that the original single-storey house (possibly a hunting lodge) dated to around 1723. The Darleys were actively involved with the construction industry, both as builders and architects, and opened-up stone quarries on the hill slopes above the house.

Between 1821-183, new fields were laid out and further substantial planting of specimen trees and ornamental shrubs undertaken. In addition, pathways around the estate were created; areas suitable for grassed clearings were selected; existing fields for grazing and tillage were preserved and a kitchen garden was established.

The historic Research Report analysed the Ordnance Survey Maps of County Dublin against the footprint of the 1939 OSI map to identify the evolution of the various pathways around the site. As shown on the adjacent plan (Historic Circulation Routes), the pathways visible on the 1834 and 1870 maps to the south of the estate were no longer in use by the time of the 1909 map. Also, a looped walk present in 1834 around the field in front of Fernhill House is shown as being removed by 1870, while a new entrance path from the south entrance gates to the front of Fernhill House had clearly been created by 1909.

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.1 Summary History of the Estate

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Garden Survey	
<b>Fern Hill (DU-50-0-185244) Fact Sheet</b>	
Site Status: Main features substantially present - some loss of integrity.	
Initial Overview	
Site Footprint Visible	Yes
Boundary Defined	Yes
Significant Development	No
Feature Richness Index	7
Architectural Features	
Principal Building	Yes
Garden Structures	No
Gateways and Gatehouses	Yes
Comments	Gate lodge.
Buildings of Indeterminate Purpose	Yes
Movement Within Site	
Entrances have changed	No
Drive position has changed	No
Avenues	No
Woodland Drives or Walks	Yes
Landscape Features	
Woodlands	Yes
Woodland Footprint Changed	Yes
Comments	Area enlarged by natural infill.
Orchards	No
Parkland	Yes
Formal Garden	Yes
Comments	Small area near house.
Kitchen / Walled and Productive Gardens	Yes
Vistas	No
Allees	No
Natural and Naturalistic Water Features	No
Artificial Water Features	No
Other Features	No

**NOTE:**  
Although not recorded on the NIAH Fact Sheet, the following features are present within Fernhill Gardens:  
Vistas Panoramic views across Dublin Bay  
Allees The 'Broadwalk' is described as a 'Victorian allée' in the publication *'Irish Gardens and Demesnes from 1830'*<sup>(13)</sup>  
There are both 'Natural and Naturalistic Water Features', in the form of waterfalls and artificial pond features (water garden).  
Other Features include a 'laurel lawn'.

Similarly, an analysis of the historic OSI maps shows the evolution of the woodlands and specimen trees of the site. From the map on the previous page (Historic Woodland & Specimen Trees), it is evident that there were only minor changes to the woodland at Fernhill between 1834 and 1939. The exception being an area to the south-west of the estate, which was not wooded on the 1834 map but had become so by 1870 and remains this way.

The estate gardens and an arboretum were laid out in 1860's, but the main contribution of the Darley's to the ornamental garden was a broadwalk - a Victorian 'allée' or flat terraced walk "...*extremely wide, so that a group of three ladies in their wide skirts could walk side by side, conversing while they took the afternoon air*"<sup>(3)</sup>.

They also created a formal kitchen garden, some distance from the house, with box-hedged borders of flowers and vegetables. These features, along with the typically Irish laurel lawn and planting of conifers, are reminders of a more formal era.

During the early parts of the 19th century, two old roads running through the estate were closed, and a new road between Woodside and Stepside constructed "...*to pass conveniently close to Fernhill but slightly removed so as to enhance the privacy of the house*"<sup>(3)</sup>. A 'private road' from Barnacullia to Stepside was opened-up through the western part of the estate, so that Judge Darley and his tenants might have a short cut to the high road, which in 1860 was altered in order to assist the building of a tunnel under the Broadwalk.

The sunken pass-way was the subject of a court case in 1861, but the court held that no right-of-way existed - "...*this had been the only road from Barnacullia to Stepside as late as 1825 but even then it was described as a private road*"<sup>(3)</sup>. Although the pass-way was stopped for several years, it was later opened up again subject to it being closed for one day each year, and the route is now defined as a Public Right of Way (refer Section 2.1).

Following almost 100 years occupation, the Darley's sold the estate in 1934 to the Walker family who, during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, undertook further improvement works to the walks, as well as additional topographical features and restoring the water features.

The Darleys appear to have been greatly influenced by the 'near natural' look, as promoted by William Robinson, and the Walkers continued the tradition of an informal landscape with layers of planting from all over the world in a seemingly random mix.

These improvements, combined with the upgrading of the information on the plant collections, facilitated the opening of the gardens to the general public in 1981, as a means for contributing to their up-keep, and the old iron gates removed shortly after to permit the safe entry of coaches.

The gardens were also used for many cultural activities, and as a setting for several films. In 1985 a sculpture trail was developed. Annual exhibitions were held in the grounds for almost ten years, at which many notable sculptors took part. In 1997 another exhibition was hosted in the farmyard and nursery area.

Whereas the original estate would have extended to around 110 acres, in the mid-19th century 26 acres were sold to form the lands for Rosemount School.

Fernhill is recognised as a designed landscape of special quality, and is now included in the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)<sup>(4)</sup> List for Ireland of Gardens and Parks of National and International Importance.

The house and gardens are also entered on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)<sup>(5)</sup>, Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (refer adjoining panel).



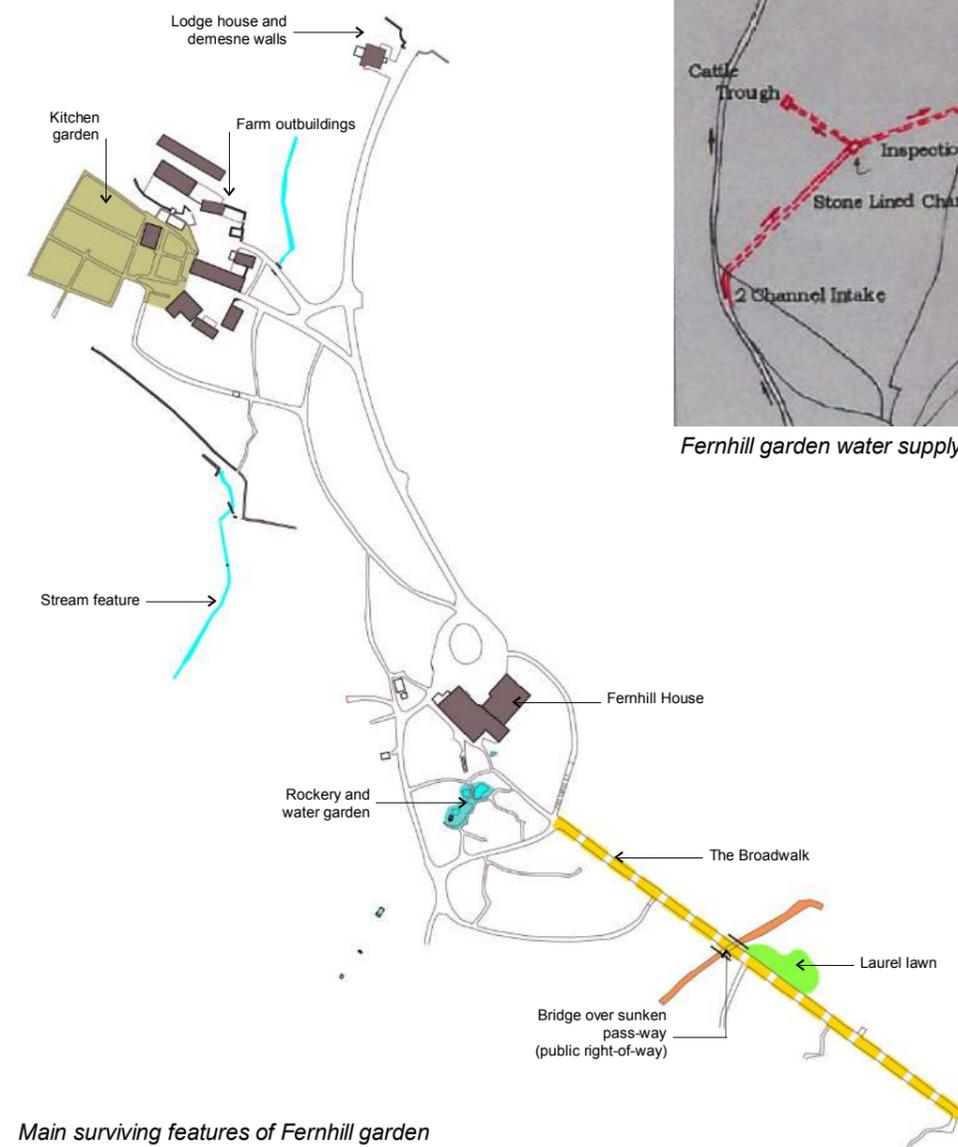
The Broadwalk at the bridge crossing

# 4. The House and Gardens

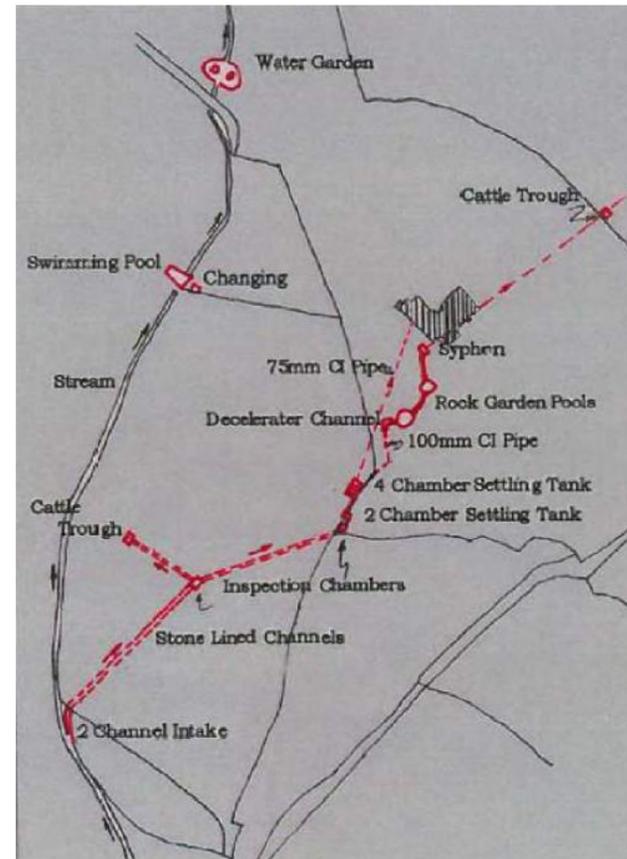
## 4.2 Fernhill Gardens



The former water gardens



Main surviving features of Fernhill garden



Fernhill garden water supply arrangements<sup>(3)</sup>

### Garden Development

The Darleys first planted a shelter belt of Scots pine and larch around the boundaries of the estate to help break-up the prevailing wind, especially from the south west, and to provide a favourable micro-climate for the growth of both exotic and native plants.

The meadow to the front of the house and either side of the Broadwalk were planted with a number of conifers, which have since grown to an impressive size - a Scots pine is one of the tallest in the country, while a *Picea smithiana* is considered to be one of the earliest introductions of this species.

The gardens were further extended towards the turn of the 19th century with the inclusion of a number of water features, a swimming pool, rockeries and a collection of many unusual rhododendron varieties. The *Rhododendron* 'Fernhill' is a particularly unique hybrid, of unknown origin but thought to have been given to Fernhill by Glasnevin Botanic Gardens, Dublin<sup>(13)</sup>.

Many more rhododendrons were planted, and the rocky sloping site is considered ideal for viewing large-leaved mountain rhododendrons from the Himalayas, interspersed with Headfort and Exbury cultivars. Fernhill is also especially noted for its outstanding collection of camelias, magnolias, pieris, and leptospermum.

Another unusual feature of the original Victorian garden is a laurel lawn, located close to the bridge over the sunken pass-way along the Boardwalk, and one of the few in Ireland surviving from that period. Other attractions include the traditional kitchen garden with a potager-style layout and a collection of associated potting sheds, glasshouses and a peach house.

The artificial water features required complex waterworks for diverting water from the local stream: "A mountain stream was split into two channels and water was directed across a wide field through sunken stone-lined channels with a feed to a cattle trough.

*Inspection chambers and settling tanks were introduced to deal with sand and grit flowing down in times of flood."*<sup>(3)</sup>

Water from the swimming pool was channeled back into the stream and continued onto the water garden where artificial ponds and a rock garden were formed. Whereas the waterworks system has continued to operate, it has required constant attention to clear the flow of grit and the leaves and debris from surrounding vegetation. The grit from the settling has been used on a regular basis to replenish the surface of the pathways through the estate.

By the time the Walkers had taken over the estate, many of these features had become overgrown and the structured layout largely subsumed by a more naturalist style. Joseph Walker embarked upon a clearance project with a view to creating a more natural looking woodland. Local Security Forces were employed to clear rocks and laurel from one of the old quarry holes near the Broadwalk. At this time the farmland at Fernhill was used mainly for pasturage.

A heather bank was created by the Walkers on the slopes above the house, and the adjacent rockery transformed with an informal mix of pieris, cordylines, bulbs, perennials azaleas, and a variety of alpines. The new planting also included Mrs Walkers famed collection of primulas.

As described in *The Gardens of Ireland*<sup>(14)</sup>:

*"Fernhill is now a typical Robinsonian garden. At the time the house was built, large gardens were subdivided into specialist areas. Trees grew in the arboretum, shrubs in the shrubberies, roses in the rose garden, and herbaceous plants in the borders, and so on. William Robinson, the proponent of the natural garden, felt that this was artificial".*

# 4. The House and Gardens

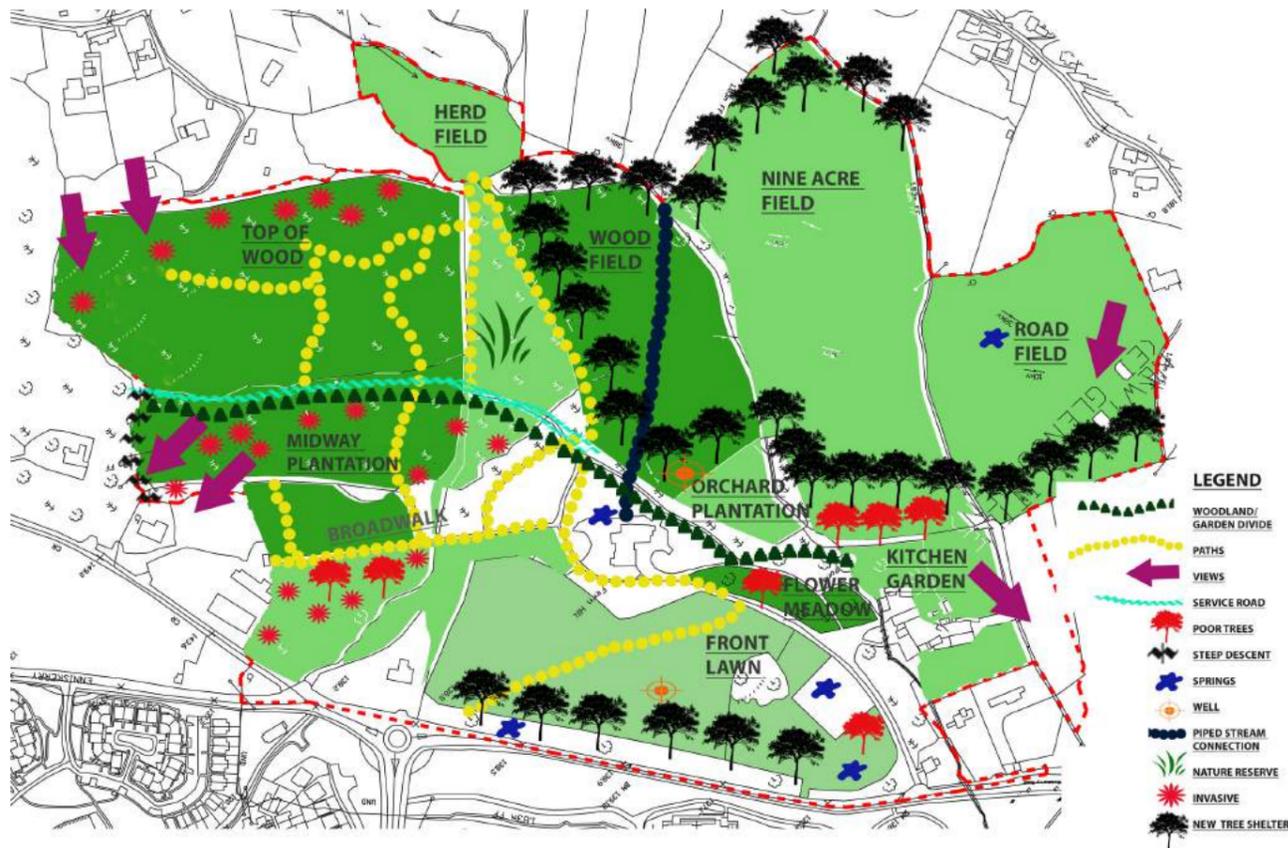
## 4.2 Fernhill Gardens



Mixed ornamental planting within the arboretum



Mature conifers around the Meadow



Map from Historic Gardens Report, by Peter Cuthbert

### Extracts from Historic Gardens Report, by Peter Cuthbert: *Fernhill - The Collection*<sup>(15)</sup>

The report by Peter Cuthbert describes that when the Darley's planted a line of conifers on the Broad Walk they set in place the initial stage of creating the great garden which evolved into Fernhill. This also provided the basis for a number of other specimen conifers to be established, such as *Thuja plicata*, *Picea smithiana* and some fine Cedars.

Once shelter was achieved, the process of planting began. With low pH and high moisture, the tree-type Rhododendrons were an obvious choice, and these have since developed to form the large imposing specimens which form the backdrop linking to the higher woodland. It's fortunate that the more virulent diseases of this genus have not taken hold. More modern hybrids, several of which had been developed at the world famous Nursery of Glendoick in Perth, were introduced and have resulted in a much extended flowering period from spring to early summer.

Magnolias are also well represented at Fernhill. Large tree forming *Magnolia campbellii* (a spectacular pink and white flowering tree) were planted in the expectation that they would develop into fine specimens. Other species planted include *Magnolia wilsonii*, *Magnolia stellata*, and *Magnolia sargentiana*. Bulbs have always been a feature of the collections at Fernhill. The earliest stage of the garden development being characterised by the Daffodil collections which are of immense value today, both visually and ecologically. Numerous bulb varieties have flourished, including Trilliums, Arums and Dicentra in shady parts of the estate, and a large group of Nectospartium which come into flower alongside *Primula japonica* planted at the top of the rockery .

Another unusual feature of the plant collection is the presence of *Embothrium*, a native to southern South America, which has established at various locations in the estate and is especially impressive when in flower.



*Dicentra spectabilis* (Bleeding heart) and *Embothrium coccineum* (Chilean Firetree) (Not photographed at Fernhill)



Tree ferns contribute to the exotic character of the gardens and a wide range can be found throughout the Fernhill estate

Peter Cuthbert considers that Fernhill was always known as a 'Spring Garden', and reinforcing this concept, while also extending the appeal of the collections throughout the summer, would seem an appropriate approach for re-establishing the estate as one of the great gardens of Dublin.



Daffodils along the driveway of Fernhill House

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.3 Other Designed Landscapes



Typical example of the grandeur of a formal designed landscape - Powerscourt Estate, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow



Innacullin, Garinish Island, West Cork - an Italian style garden designed by Harold Peto, linked by formal features that include a double sided herbaceous border and surrounded by a wild garden blending into the wider landscape setting



Part of the naturalistic plant collection at Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, County Wicklow

### Designed Landscapes

Designed gardens have been a feature of the Irish countryside for centuries, encouraged by the temperate climate which is one of the most favourable in the world for gardening. The NIAH<sup>(6)</sup> indicates that -

*“Considerable numbers survive in varying states of preservation and include town gardens, public and cemetery parks, as well as the numerous gardens and landscapes associated with country houses and demesnes”.*

Such gardens historically formed an intrinsic part of the manorial estate, retained for the owner's own pleasure and use. During the 16th century, they became increasingly ornamental, influenced by European tastes, and with the introduction of topiary, mazes and other contrived design features.

Walled garden enclosures became popular in the early 17th century, often combined with terraces, statuary and other Renaissance elements. By the end of the century, the symmetry of the gardens was being extended into the demesne lands to provide a landscape setting for the house, which in line with European traditions included the addition of tree-lined avenues, formal ornamental woods, canals and basins.

This formal style of the designed landscape was overtaken during the 1730s by fashionable ideas of naturalism, diversity and surprise in garden design. This new informality included wide sweeps of lawn around the mansion, dotted with trees as individual specimens and in clumps, with enclosing plantation belts and perimeter walls. Many had irregular stretches of water and garden buildings. Carefully laid out driveways enhanced and emphasised the natural contours of the landscape.

By the 1840s landscape parks had also become a common feature of the Irish countryside.

During the late 18th and throughout the 19th century there developed a passion for more exotic forms of gardening, exploiting the many new species then flooding into Europe from worldwide plant-hunting expeditions. Ornamental gardens and pleasure grounds were designed and planted. Heated glasshouses and conservatories, increasingly popular in the Victorian period, facilitated the growing of these rare and tender plants - including palms, orchids, ferns and exotic fruits.

The fashion for formally arranged designs of specimen plants and exotic bedding plants, that had become especially common in public parks, was challenged towards the end of the 19th by a new movement that advocated using exotic plants in a naturalistic 'Arts and Crafts' manner, as pioneered by Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson, the Irish gardener and horticultural writer.

### William Robinson

William Robinson was born in Ireland in 1838 and studied horticulture at the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin near Dublin. In 1861 he moved to London and worked in Regent's Park, and soon became a highly respected gardener and horticultural writer. During 1867 he visited France and wrote a book of *'Gleanings from French Gardens'* (1868) which criticized the formality of French gardens but praised the naturalness of the 'sub-tropical' bedding. His further travels throughout Europe and North America allowed him to see plants not native to England in their natural settings.

There followed a crusade against the formal architectural garden in favour of more natural forms of gardening - *"in nature, trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs grow happily side by side, and so they should in a garden"*.<sup>(17)</sup>

Robinson made it fashionable to move away from specimen planting to arrange plants naturally within a framework that gave order and unity.

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.3 Other Designed Landscapes



The informal designed style of Mount Usher gardens, Ashford, Co. Wicklow, strongly influenced by the William Robinson style in the late 1800's



Gravetye Manor, West Sussex, England - home of William Robinson



Lisselan Gardens in Clonakilty, Co. Cork, were laid out in Robinsonian style from the early 1850's

In 1870 he published two influential books - 'Alpine Flowers for Gardens' and 'The Wild Garden'. In the former he proposed the planting alpine species in small rock gardens, which quickly became fashionable and a now a common feature in many gardens. In 'The Wild Garden', Robinson wrote:

*"My object is... to show how we may, without losing the better features of the mixed bedding or any other system, follow one infinitely superior to any now practised, yet supplementing both, and exhibiting more of the varied beauty of hardy flowers than the most ardent admirer of the old style of garden ever dreams of. We may do this by naturalizing or making wild innumerable beautiful natives of many regions of the earth in our woods, wild and semi-wild places, rougher parts of pleasure grounds, etc, and in unoccupied places in almost every kind of garden."*<sup>(17)</sup>

His concept of using permanent planting rather than bedding plants, and his insistence on achieving an informal garden by mixing native and exotic plants, swathes of bulbs in grass and a subtle use of colour, combined with trees, rocks and water, became the norm for large gardens by the turn of the century.

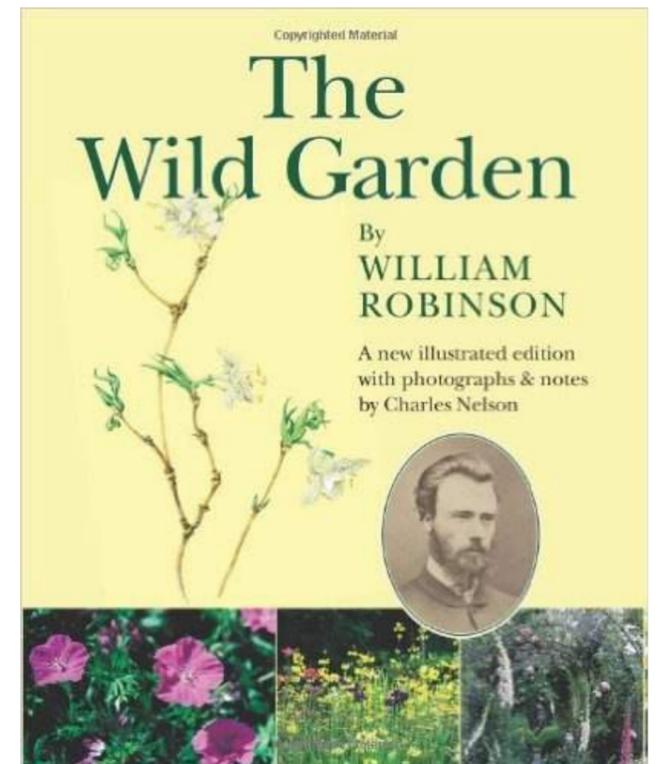
In line with Arts and Crafts tradition, Robinson also advocated the use of local materials for hard landscaping, and believed in a simplified approach to creating gardens that included minimum mowing, naturalised bulbs, grass paths and ground cover.

In 1884 Robinson started experimenting in his own garden at Gravetye Manor, which soon became the best example of this naturalistic approach (it is now an exclusive hotel and only open to the paying public).

This style of gardening is considered particularly suited to the Irish landscape and climate. It has long been a feature of Mount Usher, the most important Robinsonian garden in Co. Wicklow.

Other Irish gardens with a strong Robinsonian influence include:

- Altamout, Tullow, Co. Carlow
- Annes Grove, Castletownroche, Co. Cork
- Ballymaloe Cookery School, Shangarry, Co. Cork
- Graigueconna, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- Ilnacullin, Glengarriff, Co. Cork
- Lakemount, Glanmire, Co. Cork
- Lisselan Estate, Co. Cork
- Mount Congreve, Co. Waterford
- Roundstone, Connemara, Co. Galway
- Tanglewood, Glengarriff, Co. Cork
- Woodfield, Clara, Co. Offaly



Since it was first published in 1870, William Robinson's *The Wild Garden* has been undeniably one of the most influential books published in the history of gardening.

This edition, reprinting the original 1870 text, is augmented with captivating photographs of the plants discussed by Robinson, and enhanced with notes by Charles Nelson.

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.4 The Fernhill Buildings



West elevation



East elevation



North elevation



South elevation



Aerial view of the house from the east



Existing floor plans

### The Main House

Although considered to have evolved originally from a single storey hunting lodge (c. 1723) to a rambling family home over 120 years, the history of Fernhill House as a building is inconclusive as there are no historic plans or records available to date.

The current house probably dates to around 1893 when Edmund Darley's father purchased the land in 1893, and pulled down the original house and rebuilt it. The main structure essentially remains unchanged since the early 20th century except for the addition of the conservatory (reconstructed in 2002), the east facing gazebo and the changes associated with the crèche.

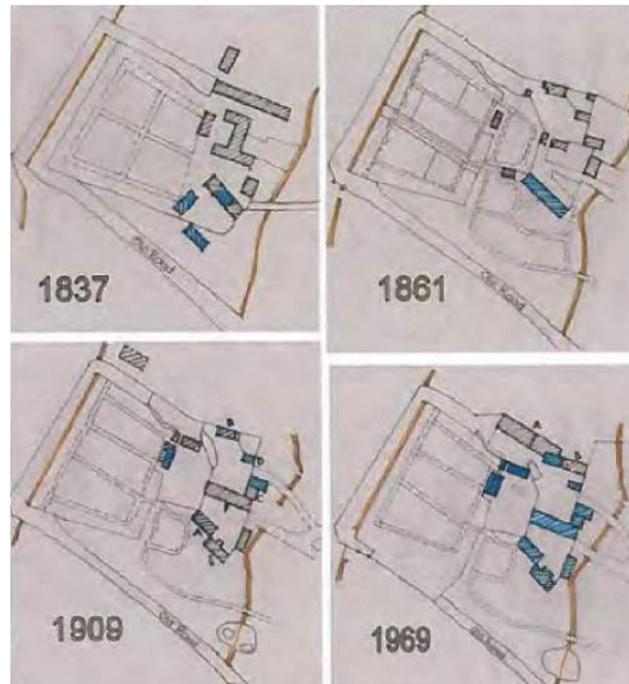
The house offers extensive accommodation, comprising a total of 26 various rooms. It has an interesting floor plan with interconnecting blocks of one and two stories surmounted by a three storey tower, presenting a unique and attractive presence in the wooded landscape. The principal rooms are distinguished by the quality of light, over-looking and framing views of the renowned gardens.

Whereas parts of the building features are Victorian in form, such as the internal joinery and some of the ground floor windows to the kitchen and stores, the main rooms and entrance have an Arts & Crafts flavour with leaded lights over casement windows, very detailed carved oak overmantles and fireplaces to the main rooms.

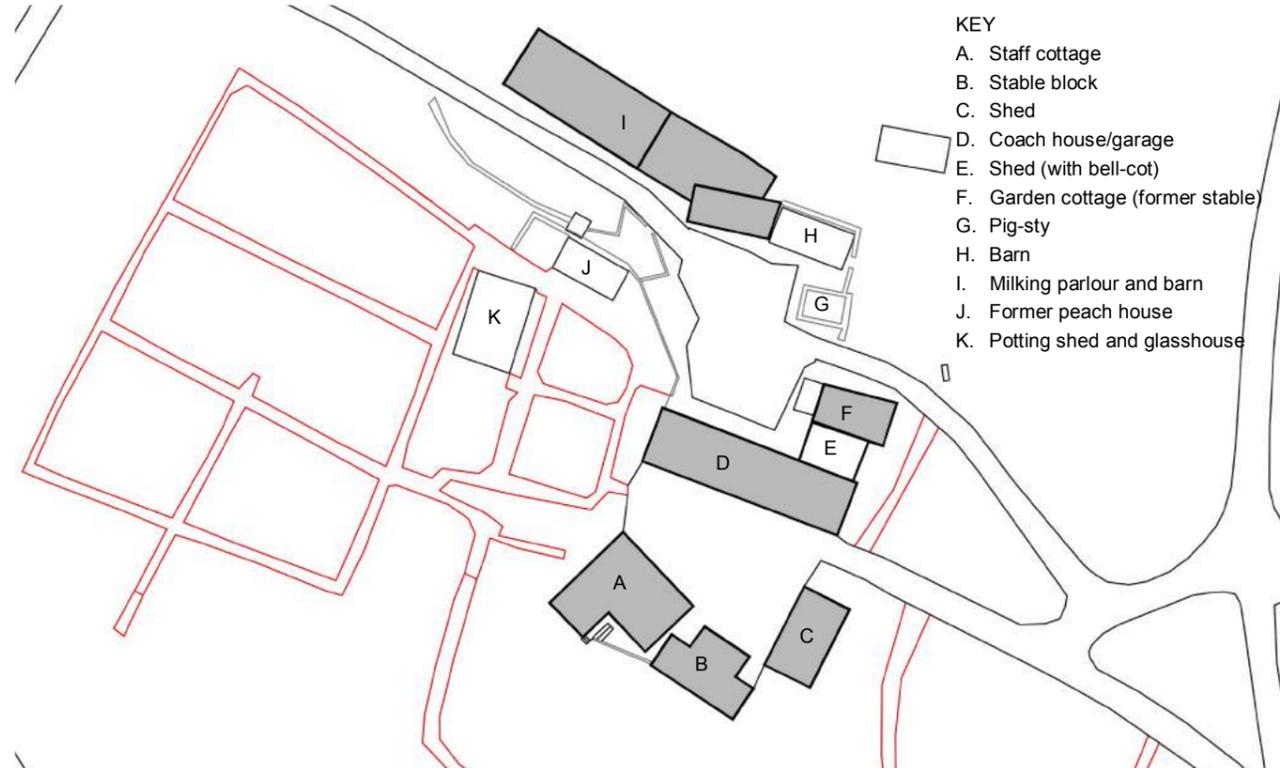
Internally the house is in reasonably good condition with significant original features intact throughout. Recent repairs to the roof and other services have been timely.

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.4 The Fernhill Buildings



Evolution of farmyard and kitchen garden layout - the buildings highlighted in blue appeared on earlier maps



Existing Plan of farmyard and kitchen garden

### The Out-buildings

The farm buildings and kitchen garden form an integral part of Fernhill and have undergone many changes over the lifetime of the estate. Between 1861 and 1909 considerable changes took place - the original gardener's cottage (A) was retained and an additional cottage building introduced (F), together with a new shed (E) with a bell-cot, a pig-sty (G) and a new stable block (B). The most prominent structure was a new, architecturally significant coach house (D), which was later used for storing motor vehicles.

The potting sheds and glasshouses of the kitchen garden were grouped around an earlier glasshouse, and included a peach house (J) built in 1897.

Further alterations were made to the farmyard and kitchen garden by the Walkers in the early 1930s, although most of the original buildings were retained. A new milking parlour and barn (I) were constructed, and an additional barn (H) located to the right hand side of the cottage. The kitchen garden was extended to include the old road, and access for cattle was reorganised through field gates.

The former small stable building (F), constructed in the 1950/60s to rear calves, was substantially altered in the late 1970s to form a residential unit, currently occupied on a life tenancy basis by a member of the Walker family.

The glasshouses are now in a very dilapidated state and the remaining buildings are in varied condition.

The Staff Cottage (A), a modern system built single storey house, is situated in the old farm yard.

A period Gate Lodge is situated at the main entrance.



Former farmyard structures ((G,H,I))



Remnant glasshouse (J)



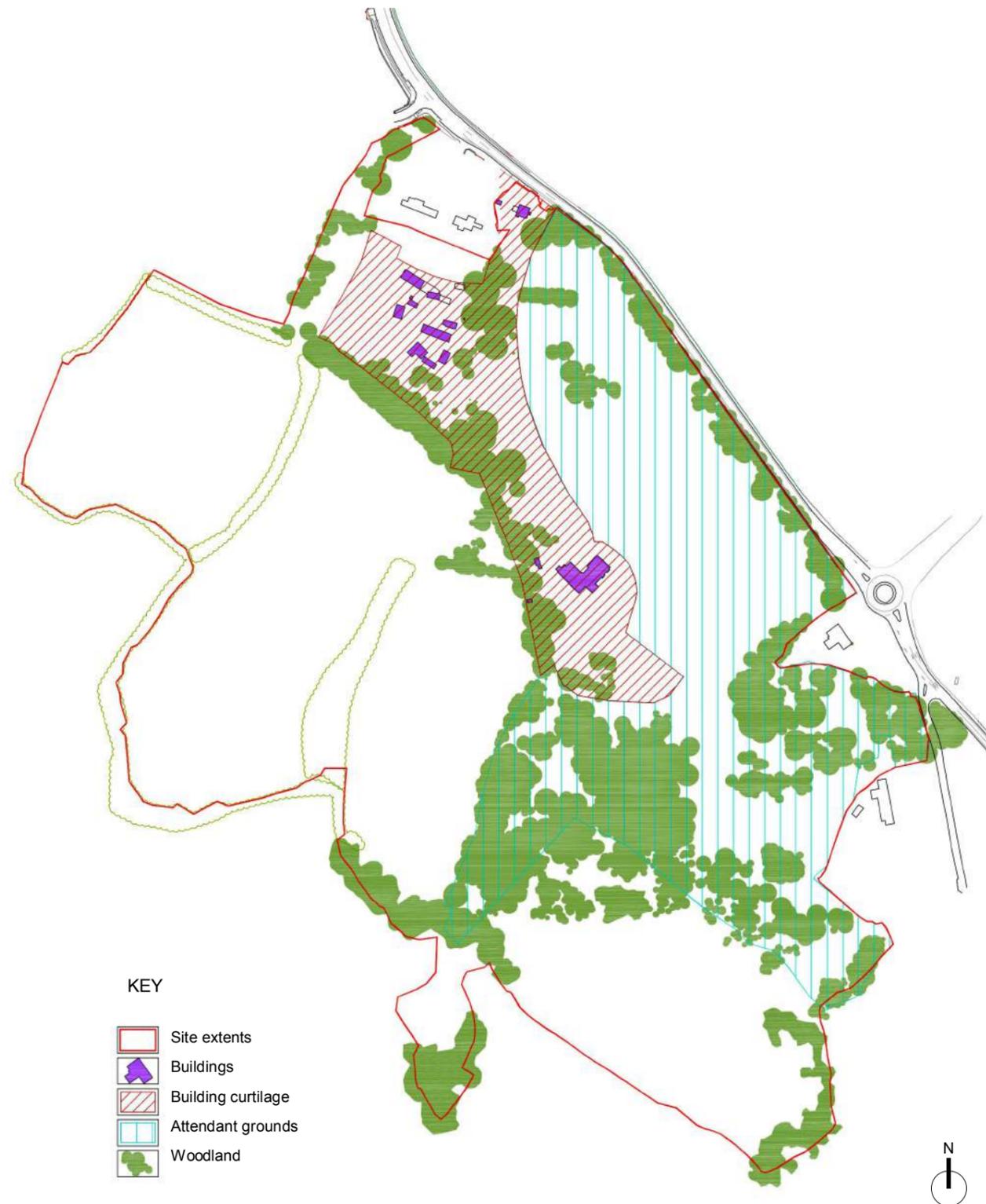
The Staff Cottage (A)



Coach house/garage (D)

# 4. The House and Gardens

## 4.5 Curtilage and Attendant Grounds

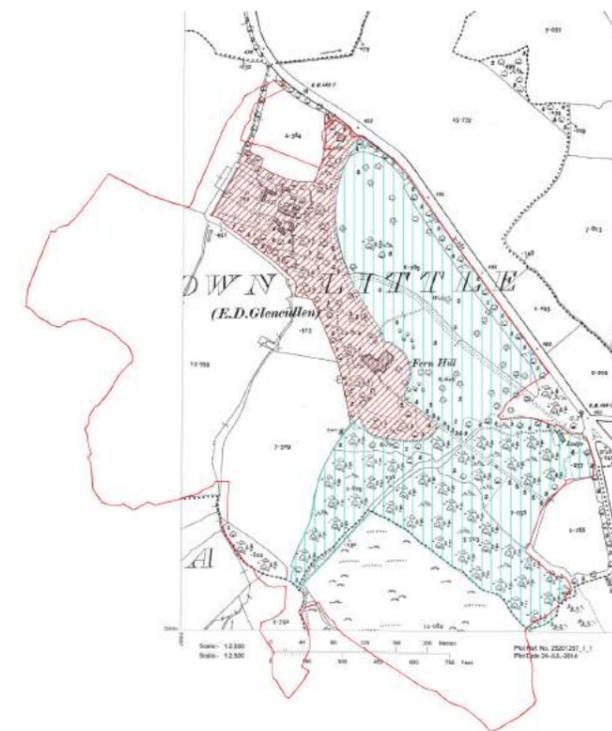


Protected Structure Curtilage Proposals (Site Plan base)

### Determining the Curtilage

As Fernhill House is a Protected Structure it includes, by definition, the land lying within the curtilage of the protected structure and other structures within that curtilage and their interiors. Although the notion of curtilage is not defined by legislation, the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines<sup>(18)</sup>, indicate that curtilage “...can be taken to be the parcel of land immediately associated with that structure and which is (or was) in use for the purposes of the structure”.

Based on the historical review of the Fernhill Estate<sup>(12)</sup>, it is evident that the protected structure, the ancillary buildings of the farmyard, the former gate lodge and the designed portion of the grounds have developed together and form an integral part of a whole. The use-related connections between the principal and ancillary structures help define the extent of the curtilage.



Curtilage Proposals (Historic OS base)

Combined with this are the more ornamental parts of the grounds, consisting of the tree-lined avenue, the artificial stream and waterfall features, the lawns and the kitchen garden, which physically and visually link the buildings and historically relate to their immediate setting. The designed landscape associated with the protected structure forms an intrinsic part of the original design concept and, as such, is inseparable from the proposed curtilage of the building.

### Determining the Attendant Grounds

The attendant grounds of a structure are “...lands outside the curtilage of the structure but which are associated with the structure and are intrinsic to its function, setting and/or appreciation”. As with Fernhill, the attendant grounds may incorporate a designed landscape deliberately laid out to complement the design of the building or to assist in its function.

The meadow to the front of the house, which has been purposely managed for its amenity value, together with the planned woodland of introduced trees, shrubs, laurel lawn and The Broadwalk, all make a significant contribution to the character, use and enjoyment of the protected structure and help to define its special interest. These areas are therefore considered to form the attendant grounds of Fernhill House.

### Proposed Level of Significance

In relation to the NIAH Definitions 2006<sup>(19)</sup>, it is proposed that Fernhill House and gardens are of Regional Significance, i.e.:

“Structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area. They also stand in comparison with similar structures or sites in other regions or areas within Ireland. Examples would include many Georgian terraces; Nenagh Courthouse, Co. Tipperary; or the Bailey Lighthouse, Howth”.

# 5. Strategy Development



- 5.1 Strategy Objectives
- 5.2 Landscape Sensitivity
- 5.3 Visitor Capacity
- 5.4 Key Physical Influences
- 5.5 Visitor Catchment
- 5.6 Vehicular Access

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.1 Strategy Objectives



*The sensitive landscape setting of Fernhill House and Gardens on the metropolitan fringe needs to be safeguarded and where possible enhanced as an integral part of the development concept*

### Recreation Provision Generally

One of the main objectives of the Feasibility Study is - *“to develop Fernhill House and Gardens as a high quality sustainable Regional Park to serve the residents of DLRCC and surrounding region”.*

This is based on the Development Plan objective to transform Fernhill Gardens into a Regional Park with consideration given to providing all the amenities associated with such a major park, including as appropriate, pitches, playgrounds, paths, car park, etc.

The Regional Parks are recognised as being the premier parks in the County, providing for a range of uses and attractions and opportunities for both high quality active and passive recreation. They may, for example, also accommodate food and craft/farmers markets and cafes/tea rooms. They can also play an important role in promoting and enhancing biodiversity due to their overall size and the eco-systems they contain.

As outlined in the Site Appraisal section of this Study, the special character of Fernhill is defined by its appearance as a small country estate, with its former substantial and unusual family residence and ancillary buildings set within an informally designed landscape of woodlands and meadows. The surviving features of the house and gardens are numerous, and considered in this report to be of Regional Significance.

Given the location of the site on the edge of the metropolitan area and at the foothills of the Dublin Mountains, it will be essential to conserve and restore (where appropriate) the landscape heritage features and retain the natural character of the estate.

Also, as described in the Ecological Appraisal (Section 3.5), in the context of an increasingly urbanised environment, Fernhill provides an important feature of biodiversity/green infrastructure within the county, connecting the uplands to the coast via two watercourses.

Protecting and enhancing these sensitive natural and built heritage features, the views and other special characteristics of the estate is an essential consideration for its future development as a Regional Park.

In meeting the development objectives for Fernhill House and Gardens, it is necessary to strike an appropriate balance between the special character of the estate, the anticipated number of visitors and the protection of wildlife, while also providing suitable opportunities for active and passive recreation.

It is also important to consider the physical carrying capacity of the resource, in terms of both the overall character of the estate and its respective parts. However, the visitor carrying capacity of a recreation destination, such as that proposed for Fernhill, is extremely difficult to determine with any certainty due to the large number of variables and unknown factors.

Visitor capacity is mostly concerned with the landscape character of a particular site and the physical and natural features that influence the limits of acceptable change. The relative sensitivity of a landscape can therefore play an important part in helping to determine the capacity of a site for different forms of proposed development.

When determining an appropriate range of visitor facilities for Fernhill House and Gardens, it is therefore necessary to consider:

- The sensitivity of the landscape;
- The carrying capacity of the estate to accommodate visitors in a sustainable manner;
- The catchment area for potential visitors (likely demand);
- Existing recreation provision within the county;
- The physical features of the estate; and
- Vehicular and pedestrian access requirements.

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.2 Landscape Sensitivity



*The sensitivity to change of the highly designed areas of the estate are assessed as being High*

### Sensitivity Appraisal

Accommodating the type of development proposed for Fernhill without significant character change or adverse effects is an essential consideration of the strategy development process.

Given the natural and built heritage features, the views and other special characteristics of the estate, the general susceptibility of the Fernhill landscape to the type of change envisaged must be considered as high. The relative sensitivity of the estate varies, however, according to the historical and ecological features present within a particular area and the extent to which these features can be viewed from public vantage points.

The generally accepted definitions of 'landscape sensitivity' and the Sensitivity Appraisal Plan for Fernhill is included in the following section.

As Fernhill House is a Protected Structure, and the land lying within its curtilage had been in continuous use for the purposes of the building, the combined features are of special importance in terms of protection. It is clear that the house, the driveway leading from the former gate lodge and the highly designed portions of the estate, such as the Broadwalk and water garden, have developed together and form an integral part of a whole, and are thereby very vulnerable to change.

Similarly, the meadow to the front of the house is recognised as a good example of species rich neutral grassland, which is now an extremely rare grassland habitat within the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. It also provides an important setting to glimpsed views of the house and its designed gardens from the Enniskerry Road. As the intrinsic values of these combined built and natural features are high, the area is assessed as being highly sensitive to development, and the thresholds for change considered to be very low.

The farmyard, the kitchen garden, the woodland separating the designed portion of the estate from the agricultural fields to the south-west, and the ornamental woodland to the south of the Broadwalk, physically and visually link the most vulnerable parts of the estate and relate them to their immediate setting. The intrinsic values of these features are medium/high, and the landscape and visual characteristics of the areas are considered to be vulnerable to change. As they can accommodate the type of development envisaged only in limited situations without significant character change or adverse effects, the thresholds for significant change are low, and the sensitivity of these areas to change is assessed as High-medium.

The remaining woodland areas on the upper slopes to the south of the estate and adjoining the north-east side of the Broadwalk are also intrinsic to the setting and/or appreciation of the estate, and form part of the 'attendant grounds' of Fernhill House. Whereas the landscape and visual characteristics of these areas are susceptible to change, the intrinsic values are lower (moderate) and there is potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some situations without significant character change or adverse effects. The thresholds for significant change are intermediate, and the sensitivity of these areas to change is therefore assessed as Medium.

The area of scrub/bracken on the highest ground to the south is visually separated from the rest of the estate by the intervening woodland and remains largely inaccessible. It is therefore less susceptible to the type of development envisaged and more resilient to change. There is, however, a known badger sett in the area which would need to be carefully considered as part of the development proposals.

The sensitivity of the three large agricultural fields to the south-west of the estate varies according to their individual character and relationship with adjoining uses. They are generally visually prominent when viewed from parts of the Ballyedmonduff Road, and from private properties in the vicinity.

The field adjacent to the woodland (Wood Field) is visually contained by mature trees and hedgerows on all sides, and is considered most vulnerable to change due to its enclosed character and the pronounced visual contrast provided in relation to surrounding dense vegetation. The sensitivity of this field is assessed as High-medium, and the thresholds for significant change are low.

The middle field (Nine Acre Field) is mostly open along its south-west boundary and, although defined by hedgerows on two sides, does not possess such an intimate character as Wood Field. It is, however, partially visible in views from private properties on Ballyedmonduff Road, and the more sensitive parts of the gardens adjoin its north-eastern edge. The sensitivity of this field is assessed as Medium, and the thresholds for significant change are intermediate.

The most northern agricultural field (Road Field) is the least defined by landscape features, and is seen from partial views against the backdrop of Rosemont School and the urban edge. It has also been subject to recent land-filling which has altered the natural profile of the ground. The sensitivity of this field is assessed as Medium-low, and the thresholds for significant change are higher.

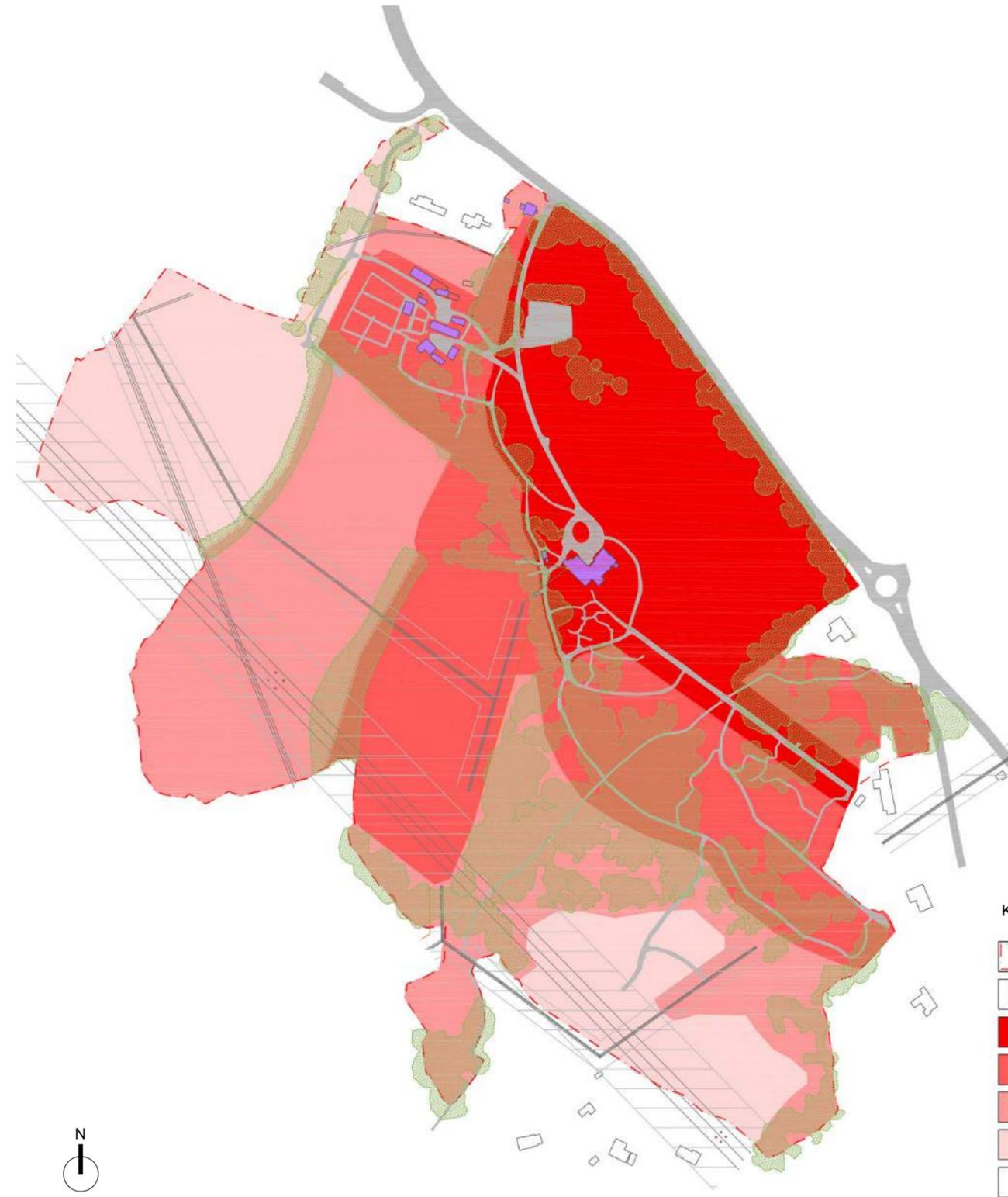
The linear belt of mixed trees and scrub along the boundary with the school to the north-west of the estate, which also contains refuse and waste and many trees of low quality/value, is least susceptible to the type of development envisaged and more resilient to change due to the lower intrinsic values of these features. The sensitivity of these areas to change is therefore assessed as Medium-Low. The proximity of the school, however, would need to be taken into account as part of any development proposals.

There are no areas within the estate with landscape and/or visual characteristics considered to be robust or degraded enough to accommodate proposed development without any significant character change or adverse effects.

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.2 Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Definition
<b>High</b>	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the zone are very vulnerable to change and/or its intrinsic values are high and the zone is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
<b>High-medium</b>	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the zone are vulnerable to change and/or its intrinsic values are medium/high and the zone can accommodate the relevant type of development only in limited situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are low.
<b>Medium</b>	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the zone are susceptible to change and/or its intrinsic values are moderate but the zone has some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development only in some situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are intermediate.
<b>Medium-low</b>	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the zone are resilient to change and/or its intrinsic values are medium/low and the zone can accommodate the relevant type of development only in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
<b>Low</b> (none identified)	Landscape and/or visual characteristics of the zone are robust or degraded and/or its intrinsic values are low and the zone can accommodate the relevant type of development only in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very high.



For the purpose of this study, sensitivity is taken to mean the susceptibility of the landscape to a particular type of change or development. It is defined in terms of the interactions between the components of the landscape itself, the way it is perceived and the nature of the development.

Landscape sensitivity combines the sensitivity of the landscape resource (including its historical and ecological features) and visual sensitivity (such as views and visibility). In the context of Fernhill, sensitivity also includes values that contribute to the landscape (such as designations and constraints, i.e. Protected Structure and inclusion on NIAH List of Historic Gardens).

The relative sensitivity of a particular landscape can play an important part in helping to determine the relative capacity of a site for different forms of development - refer Section 5.3 for further details.

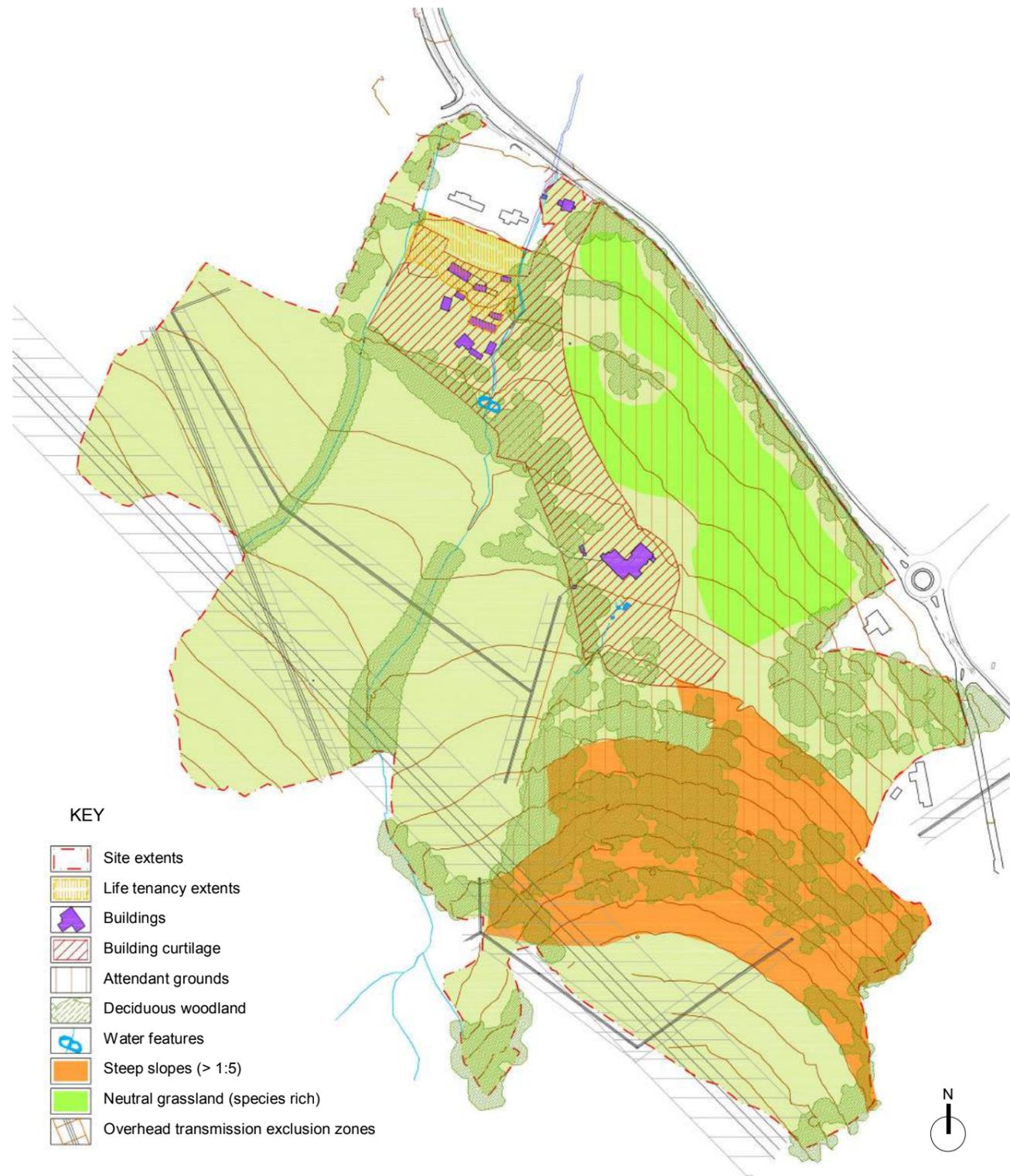
Based on the Site Context and the Site Appraisals, an assessment of the relative sensitivity of the Fernhill estate to the type of change proposed, as described on the previous page, is illustrated on the adjoining plan. The definitions used for sensitivity analysis are also given on the adjoining table.

- KEY**
- Site extents
  - Existing buildings
  - High sensitivity
  - High-medium sensitivity
  - Medium sensitivity
  - Medium-low sensitivity
  - Low sensitivity

Sensitivity analysis plan

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.3 Visitor Capacity



Physical constraints

The visitor capacity of a particular landscape is generally defined as:

*“The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed”<sup>(22)</sup>.*

However, landscape capacity is usually concerned with comparative assessments of potential large scale development across extensive areas or landscape types, such as new settlements, wind farms or aquaculture. As Fernhill is concerned with a specific form of development on an identified site, there are no capacity comparisons to be made with other sites, so the emphasis for this study is on the sensitivity of the receiving environment in relation to the type of change proposed, based on the site appraisals and recognised designations.

The maximum number of visitors that a destination can absorb in relation to landscape sensitivity is difficult to predict, as this is dependent on other factors, such as the way in which the visitors behave, for example - a large group of bird watchers or people with horticultural interest moving through a landscape will have a different impact compared to a similar sized group of school children. In addition, visitor impacts will change with seasons. It is therefore important to consider the acceptability of the likely impacts, whether they will result in the landscape character being adversely affected or the quality of visitors' experience declining.

The character of Fernhill is largely that of a domestic estate with designed gardens of recognised quality, and consequently highly susceptible to change. The acceptable limits of this change need to balance the special character with the main objective for creating a Regional Park. This will, to a large extent, be determined by the physical constraints of the site, i.e. the topography, the woodland, the restricted access and the overhead cables (refer adjoining plan).

The gradients, in particular, limit the opportunities for introducing active recreation facilities or extensive hard surface parking areas, without excessive cut-and-fill of the landform and resultant adverse physical impacts on hedgerows and streams and visual impacts from within and outside the estate.

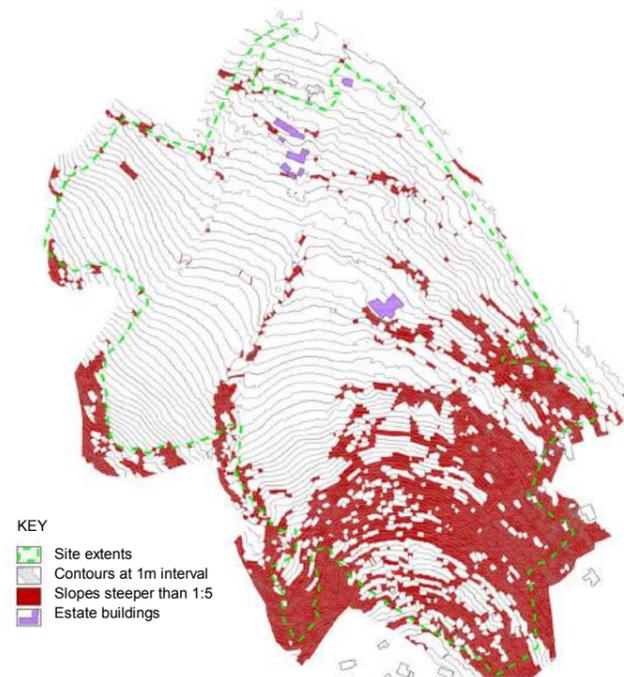
Adverse impacts on the overall tranquillity and the sense of place is equally difficult to quantify, as this will be greatly influenced by visitor numbers at any given time and the areas of the park in which they are concentrated. The sensitivity mapping provides an indication of which areas are likely to be more vulnerable to visitor pressure than others. The most sensitive areas to the type of change envisaged, for example, are associated with the immediate setting of the house and the designed parts of the gardens. The visitor carrying capacity of these areas can be expected to be considerably less than the more robust landscapes of the agricultural fields or the upper woodlands. But it is the more sensitive areas that have the most visitor interest in terms of visual, cultural and horticultural appeal, and which define the overall character of the park.

The means for retaining both the tranquil and horticultural qualities of the gardens as far as possible will entail the management of general behavioural issues such as reducing risks from trampling, litter, flower picking, and dog walking, as well encouraging the use of less-sensitive parts of the park in order to help dilute the intensity of use. The provision of suitable recreational facilities within the three agricultural fields will therefore be essential, combined with an attractive and convenient pathway network that encourages visitors to explore the wider attractions of the park.

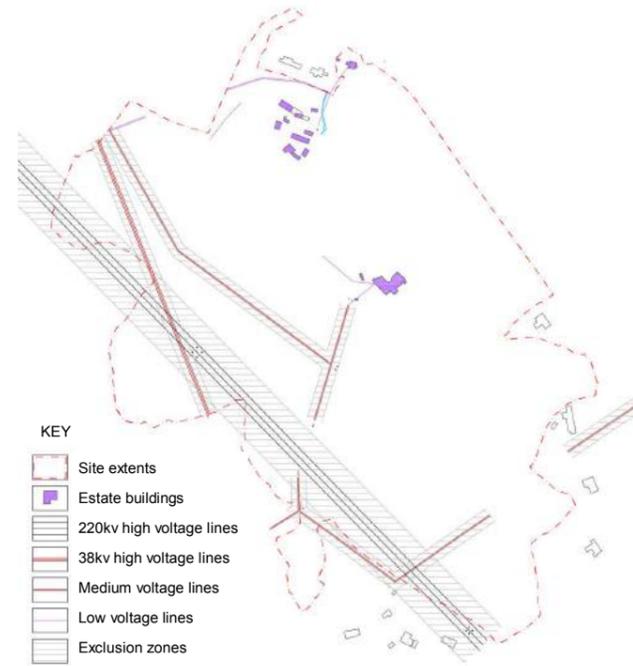
Future monitoring will also be essential so that alternative actions can be evaluated where necessary and an effective strategy for sustainable visitor management formulated.

# 5. Strategy Development

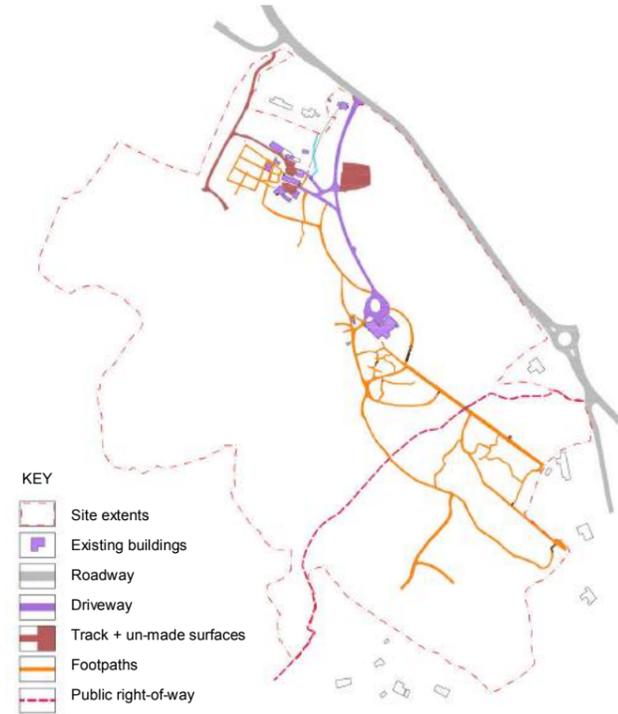
## 5.4 Key Physical Influences



Gradients



Overhead transmission lines



Access and Circulation

The main physical features that influence the suitable development of Fernhill as a Regional Park can be summarised as:

### Gradients

The site slopes steadily from south-west to south-east, with especially steep gradients (up to 1:5) across most of the southern heavily-wooded parts.

### Overhead Transmission Lines

The 220kv and 38kv (HV) and medium voltage (MV) overhead lines that extend across the south-western parts of the site will require substantial exclusion zones or costly under-grounding.

### Access and Circulation

Vehicle access is limited due to the physical form of Enniskerry Road and its heritage boundary features. Whereas there is a well-developed network of internal pedestrian routes, these are incomplete or have become neglected.

### Ecological Significance

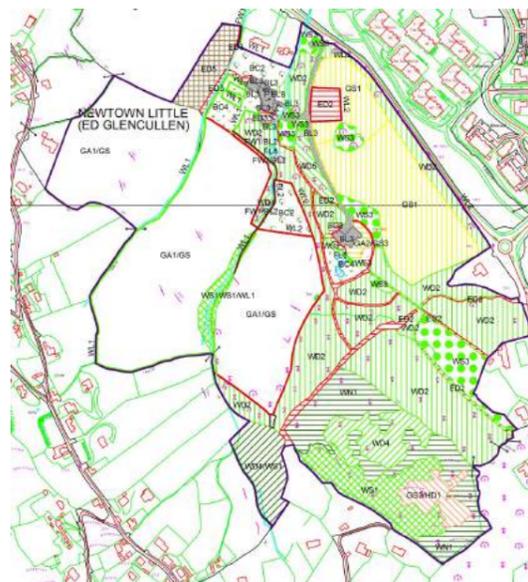
The Ecology Survey identifies that the main interest in Fernhill is the mosaic of habitats present, including mature trees and woodland, watercourses and ponds, variety of grassland habitats and scrub. The estate is also of importance for a variety of fauna, such as birds, bats, badgers, deer and other mammals.

### Woodland

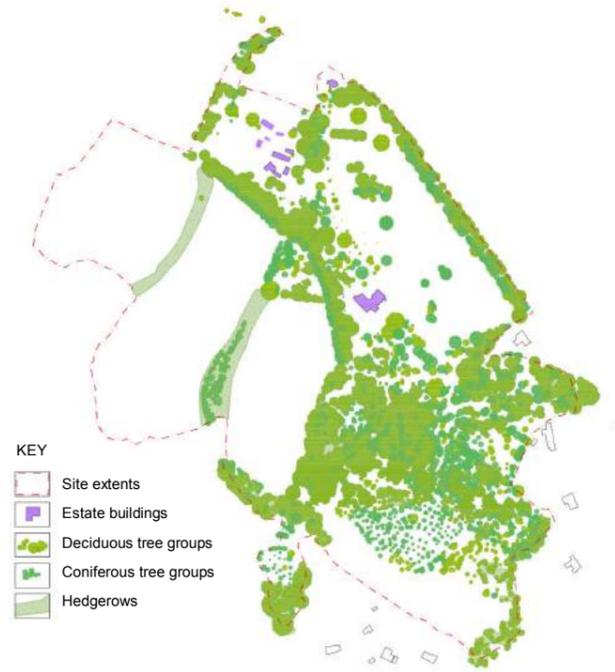
The mature trees and woodland, with a variety of native and ornamental species, are a particular feature of Fernhill that need protection and careful management to ensure their special value is retained and enhanced.

### Heritage

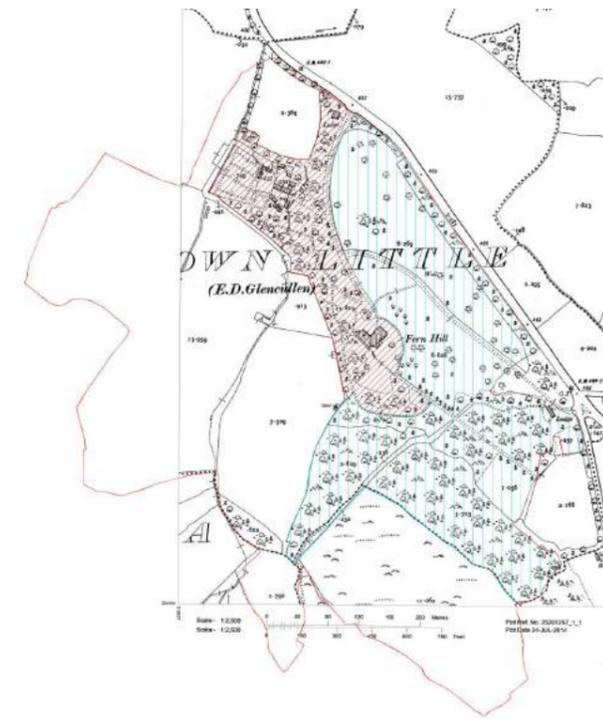
Fernhill House is a Protected Structure, and the gardens are included on the NIAH Garden Survey. The proposed curtilage of the house encompasses the connections between the main house and the ancillary buildings and the associated designed landscape, while the woodland and the meadow are defined as attendant grounds.



Ecology



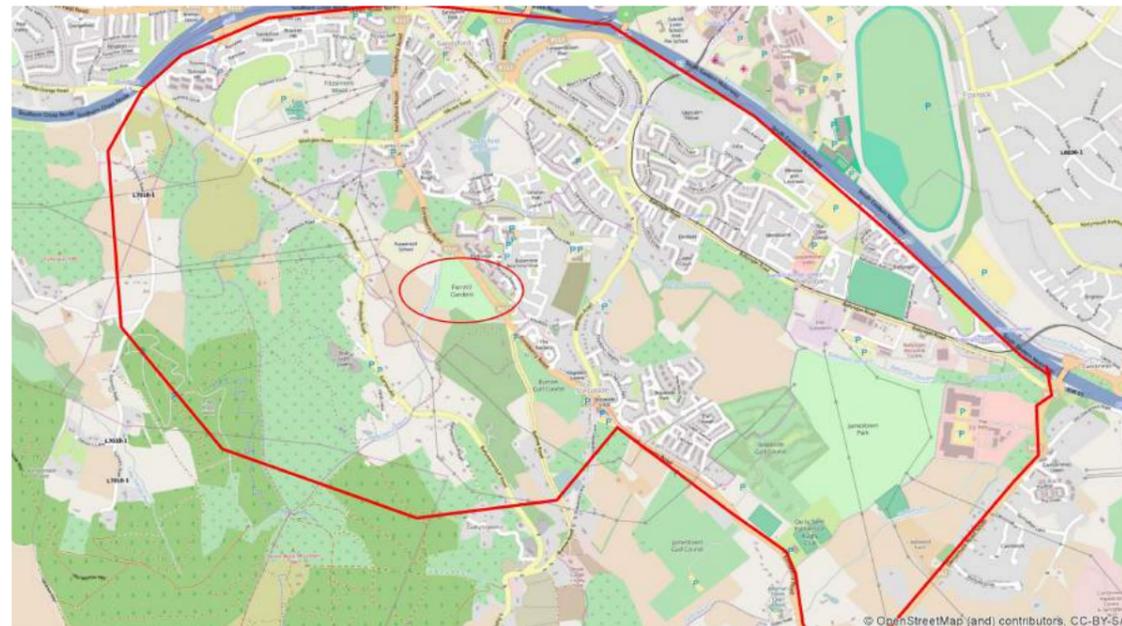
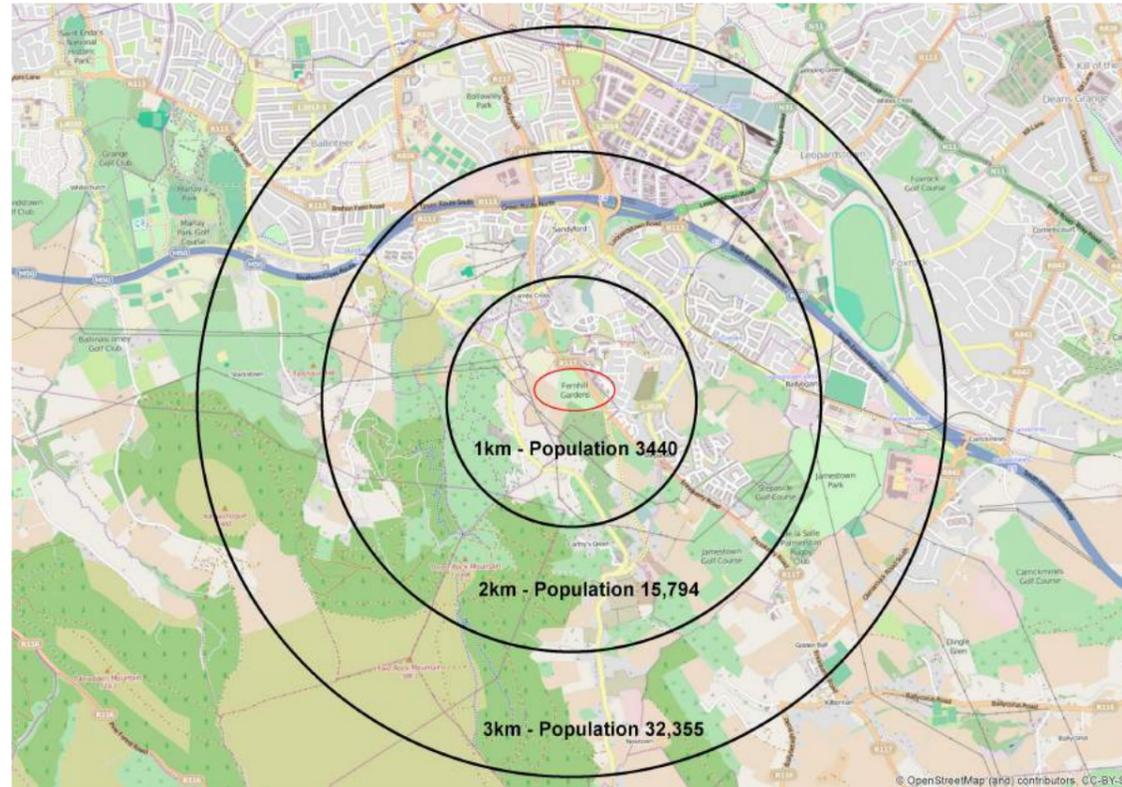
Woodland



Heritage

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.5 Visitor Catchment



Population: 19,767 (10% of County total)  
Housing 8,271 (60% Houses / 40% Apartments)

Fernhill Estate Environs - Census 2011

### Catchment Area and Participation in Recreational Activities

The County population is 206,261 persons (2011 Census). Fernhill House and Gardens is located within the extensive south-western rural part of the County, which is identified as subject to High Growth, within the Electoral Area Boundary of Glencullen-Sandyford (which has a population of 36,465, containing both city and rural areas). The Glencullen area has seen a 26.7% increase in population (between 2006 and 2011), while the Sandyford population has risen by 2.48% during the same period.

The population within easy access of Fernhill is estimated as:

- 3km - 32,355 persons
- 2km - 15,794 persons
- 1km - 3,440 persons

Within 0.5km to 1.5km distance (approx. 5-15 minutes walking distance) are both established and new residential areas, as well as the outdoor attractions of the Dublin Mountains.

It is generally recognised that participation in most forms of recreational activity is steadily increasing. The Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report for 2015<sup>(20)</sup> indicates that 45% of the population participate regularly in sport. This equates to approximately 1.6 million people directly benefiting from the physical, psychological and social gains obtained from all types of sport. The key points arising from the Sports Monitor interim survey results for 2013 were:

- Increase in sporting participation from 45% in 2011 to 47% in the first half of 2013.
- Personal exercise remains the most popular sporting activity, with running seeing a notable increase (from 6% to 9%).
- Younger females may be transitioning their physical activity from recreational walking to running.

- The previously identified trend towards activities participated in on an individual basis continues.
- Recreational walking remains the most popular activity, with 65% having participated in this during the previous 7 days.
- 32% are meeting the National Physical Activity Guidelines, and the proportion that are sedentary has declined from 13% to 12%.
- Initial results suggest declines in volunteering, club membership and attendance at events.

Findings from the Irish Sports Monitor also indicate that Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is one of the top performers in Ireland in terms of activity levels.

It is clear from the study findings that there is a large demand for recreational provision in the County, with up to 97,000 participating in sporting activities (with recreational walking as the most popular). In relation to the more immediate catchment of Fernhill, this could equate to around 15,000 participants within a 3km radius, and 1,600 within 1km of the site.

However, there is little data on the distances that people should be or are willing to travel to facilities of a particular type. Studies from the UK<sup>(21)</sup> suggest travel times of 15-20 minutes as a guide, but for larger or more unique facilities it is likely that people would be willing to travel up to 40km. The higher the quality of a facility and the greater range of the activities they contain, the further people are likely to be willing to travel and the more often they are likely to use the facility.

Also, due to the unique character of Fernhill, it is intended that the new Regional Park will serve the residents of the County and the surrounding region. This could attract, for example, specialist groups with interest in the botanical and heritage features of the site, as well as participants in general leisure and sporting activities, and walking in particular.

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.5 Visitor Catchment



Marlay Park sports pitches



Cabinteely Park cafe



Killiney Hill Park natural play

### Existing Recreation Provision

The County is well-provided for in terms of urban recreation, with around 63 parks and 337 open spaces, ranging in size from large Regional Parks to local pocket parks and squares. The DLRCC Open Space Strategy (2012-15) found that 80% of all households in the County live within 600m of a park.

The sports infrastructure in the County is also good with a range of facilities based on grass, all-weather, track, water, snow (artificial) and mountain, as well as a wide range of indoor facilities. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown's natural resources, in terms of its excellent coastal and mountain landscape, are another huge asset and benefit to participation in outdoor recreational activities and their future potential.

Within the existing regional Parks, Marlay Park provides the widest range of facilities, followed by Cabinteely Park (refer Section 2.2). All five parks have parking facilities, toilets, playgrounds, walking paths and historical features. With the exception of Blackrock Park, all provide a coffee/tea shop facility. Only Marlay Park and Cabinteely Park have sporting facilities. Events and functions can be held at Marlay Park (especially), Cabinteely Park and People's Park. Blackrock Park and Killiney Park have the fewest facilities.

### Recreational Capacity Generally

The provision of facilities within the current Regional Parks is largely determined by the character of the respective sites. Marlay Park is extensive (100ha), surrounded by residential areas and comprising a variety of landscape types. Cabinteely Park (45ha) is a former demesne, dominated by the grand house and an informal parkland setting. People's Park is essentially urban, in a formal Victorian style, while Blackrock Park and Killiney Park are strongly influenced by the sea and the local topography respectively.

In terms of broadly assessing visitor numbers, the use of available parking spaces at the existing Regional Parks can provide an approximate estimate of numbers arriving by car during peak periods, as well as the car parking capacity in relation to the size of each park (refer table below). The total number of visitors would be increased by those arriving on foot, by cycle and public transport, especially for the urban parks.

The parking capacity in relation to area ranges from 4.9% to 1.8% per park. There are no parking facilities at People's Park.

Recent statistics for Marlay Park<sup>(22)</sup> show the average daily vehicles using the park as 1,971, and the average daily number of people as 4,792. The peak hourly number of vehicles entering the park is given as 501, and the peak hourly number of people as 1,030. The figures demonstrate that the large majority of visitors arrive by car and, based on daily numbers, with an average car occupancy of 2.4 persons.

When applying these broad calculations to Fernhill (34ha), the equivalent parking provision would need to be between approximately 60-170 spaces. Using the same car occupancy rate, with an assumed addition of 25% for visitors arriving by different transport modes, this would give around 150-425 persons attending the new park during peak periods (equivalent to approx. one-third of the peak hourly number visiting Marlay Park).

Park	Area (ha)	Parking Spaces	Persons by car <sup>(1)</sup>	Spaces per ha
Marlay	100	490	1,176	4.9
Cabinteely	45	210	504	4.7
People's	1.6	-	NA	NA
Blackrock	12	22	53	1.8
Killiney	46	85	204	1.8
Fernhill	34	60-170	144-408	1.8-4.9

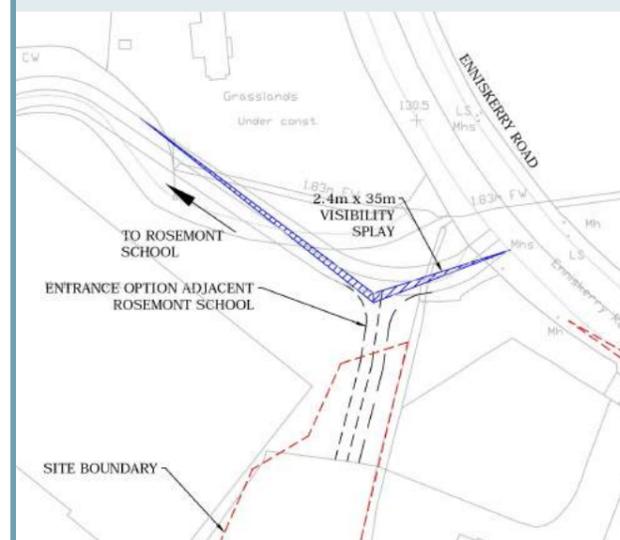
(1) Average occupancy of 2.4 persons per car.

*Parking capacity and visitor numbers (approx.)*

# 5. Strategy Development

## 5.6 Vehicular Access

### OPTION A: Entrance adjacent to Rosemont School PREFERRED



#### Advantages:

- Use of existing junction
- Sufficient width for right turn filter lane on Enniskerry Road
- Junction can be signalized and include pedestrian crossings
- Low impact route to potential site car parking areas in least sensitive part of the park
- Retains integrity of estate – minimal impact on natural and built heritage
- Potential for shared use of the car park by adjacent school
- Improved junction and more prominent entrance for school.

#### Disadvantages:

- Lack of prominence as the main entrance to the park
- Relatively steep gradient of existing ground/track



Existing Rosemont School entrance

### OPTION B: Existing entrance from Enniskerry Road



#### Advantages:

- Use of existing entrance and access drive
- Access point easily identified by visitors
- Direct link to existing parking area
- Retains original access into the site

#### Disadvantages:

- Restricted visibility of traffic in both directions
- Insufficient width for right-turn filter lane
- Park traffic would pass through the central, most sensitive part of the site
- Achieving sight lines would require removal of heritage boundary features (estate wall and mature trees) with major impact on the character of the site
- Existing car parking in a very sensitive part of the site



Existing sub-standard entrance to the estate

### OPTION C: Roundabout relocation on Enniskerry Road



#### Advantages:

- Access point easily located by park visitors
- Traffic flow maintained on Enniskerry Road
- Safe and efficient park access is achievable

#### Disadvantages:

- Increased scale of engineering works and costs with relocating roundabout
- Land take may be required
- Potential issue with conditioned open space to north-east side of roundabout
- Alternative access to adjacent dwelling required
- Partial removal of boundary features required to achieve visibility splays
- Car parking would be located in a very sensitive part of the site.



Existing roundabout on Enniskerry Road

Whereas the Fernhill Estate is relatively well located in terms of transport links, and within comfortable walking distance of residential areas, nearby bus services (from Enniskerry Road and Stepside village) and a nearby Luas stop, vehicular access is restricted to the Enniskerry Road.

From recent planning applications, the Preliminary Engineering Report<sup>(7)</sup> indicates that although increased traffic generation will arise from the development of Fernhill as a Regional public park, this will be moderated by peak traffic movements into and out of the park being more spread out throughout the day/ week.

The existing road network is expected to have adequate capacity for the proposed park development. However, the vehicular access to Fernhill is presently sub-standard due to the lack of a right turning lane on Enniskerry Road and the generally poor forward visibility at the junction.

The Engineering Report considers a number of solutions for achieving improved vehicular access. The merits of each of the viable options are summarised on the adjoining figures. The three other solutions were not pursued due to the adverse impact on the character of the site, such as removal of significant heritage boundary features (estate wall and mature trees); significant visual impact on the curtilage of Fernhill House; and car parking in the most sensitive parts of the site.

Based on this assessment, it is proposed that Option A is the most suitable arrangement for future vehicle access, with Option C as an alternative solution (but with significant land-take and cost implications). The advantages of Option A considerably out-weigh the minor disadvantages, which in any event can be suitably addressed through reinforcing the presence of the existing and proposed pedestrian entrances to the park, and by careful ground modelling between the existing trees along the north-west site boundary.

# 6. Outline Proposals



- 6.1 Option Development
- 6.2 Spatial Options
- 6.3 Building Use Options
- 6.4 Options Appraisal
- 6.5 Next Steps

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.1 Option development

### SPATIAL OPTION 1



**Main Features:**

- Vehicle access shared with Rosemont School
- Limited car parking provision (60no. spaces) in low impact location
- Low visitor numbers (<200 at peak periods)
- Limited recreational provision, with emphasis on informal and educational activities
- No requirement for under-grounding of cables
- Low intensity building uses



### SPATIAL OPTION 2



**Main Features:**

- Higher profile vehicle access from relocated roundabout at southern end of Enniskerry Road
- Moderate car parking provision (120no. spaces) in high impact location
- Moderate visitor numbers (around 300 at peak periods)
- Increased recreational provision, including active sports (1.5ha)
- Requirement for under-grounding of MV power cable
- Moderate intensity building uses



### SPATIAL OPTION 3



**Main Features:**

- Vehicle access shared with Rosemont School, with option for alternative access via school grounds
- Maximum car parking provision (approx. 170no. spaces) in medium impact location
- High visitor numbers (around 400 at peak periods)
- Extensive recreational provision, including adventure play, active sports (1.5ha) and sculpture trail
- Requirement for under-grounding of MV power cables
- High intensity building uses



The Spatial Options are undertaken to give a graphic representation of potential uses and features of Fernhill Park and Gardens. The options have been informed by the findings of this report with particular consideration given to the Site Appraisal and Strategy Development. The development of the Spatial Options has been undertaken at a high level and may be referred to in the development of the Masterplan for Fernhill.

For each Option there are a number of common elements that apply, relating to landscape conservation and enhancement, habitat management, natural and built heritage interpretation, accessibility and safety (refer 6.2 Spatial Options).

#### KEY TO OPTIONS

-  Site extents
-  Public vehicle access
-  Main pedestrian routes
-  Service vehicle access
-  Family activity circuit
-  Public right-of-way
-  Public car park
-  Natural play area
-  Adventure play area
-  Active sports
-  Camping ground
-  Water feature
-  Orientation point
-  Lookout point

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.2 Spatial Options

### KEY

#### Existing

-  Site extents
-  Life tenancy extents
-  Estate buildings
-  Overhead power lines
-  Contours at 5.0m interval
-  Woodland
-  Hedgerows
-  Water features

#### Proposed

-  Public vehicle access
-  Main pedestrian routes
-  Secondary pedestrian routes
-  Public right-of-way
-  Existing paths refurbished
-  Public car park
-  Children's playground
-  Structure/screen woodland
-  Ornamental landscape areas



Option 1 Proposals Plan

### OPTION 1

#### Main Features:

1. Public vehicle access at entrance adjacent to Rosemont School
2. Secondary pedestrian/cycle access at entrance to existing driveway
3. Main public car park (hard surfaced) along new driveway, approx. 60 spaces
4. Building uses as Sheet 6.3
5. Kitchen garden
6. Natural play area
7. Main pedestrian route
8. Family activity circuit (2.5km approx.)
9. Panoramic viewpoint
10. Passive recreation

#### Common Features:

- A. Hay meadow
- B. Rock garden and pools refurbished
- C. Orientation node (Broadwalk)
- D. Focal feature (Broadwalk)
- E. Woodland trails
- F. Right-of-Way upgraded (surface)
- G. Orientation point (Right-of-Way)
- H. Information point (Right-of-Way)

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.2 Spatial Options

### KEY

#### Existing

-  Site extents
-  Life tenancy extents
-  Estate buildings
-  Overhead power lines
-  Contours at 5.0m interval
-  Woodland
-  Hedgerows
-  Water features

#### Proposed

-  Public vehicle access
-  Service vehicle access
-  Main pedestrian routes
-  Secondary pedestrian routes
-  Public right-of-way
-  Power cable under-grounded
-  Cycle activity circuit + health walk
-  Existing paths refurbished
-  Public car park
-  Children's playground
-  Activity play area
-  Active sports
-  Structure/screen woodland
-  Ornamental landscape areas



Option 2 Proposals Plan

### OPTION 2

#### Main Features:

1. Public vehicle access from relocated roundabout on Enniskerry Road
2. Secondary pedestrian/cycle access at entrance to existing driveway
3. Main public car park (hard surfaced), approx. 120 spaces
4. Service vehicle access
5. Building uses as Sheet 6.3
6. Kitchen garden
7. Active sports
8. Natural play area
9. Adventure play area, assault course, den building area, etc.
10. Main pedestrian route, with family activity circuit where shown
11. Family activity cycle circuit (2.5km approx.)
12. Panoramic viewpoint
13. Passive recreation
14. MV cables under-grounded

#### Common Features:

- A. Hay meadow
- B. Rock garden and pools refurbished
- C. Orientation node (Broadwalk)
- D. Focal feature (Broadwalk)
- E. Woodland trails
- F. Right-of-Way upgraded (surface)
- G. Orientation point
- H. Information point (Right-of-Way)

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.2 Spatial Options

### KEY

#### Existing

-  Site extents
-  Life tenancy extents
-  Estate buildings
-  Overhead power lines
-  Contours at 5.0m interval
-  Woodland
-  Hedgerows
-  Water features

#### Proposed

-  Public vehicle access
-  Service vehicle access
-  Main pedestrian routes
-  Secondary pedestrian routes
-  Public right-of-way
-  Power cable under-grounded
-  Cycle activity circuit + health walk
-  Existing paths refurbished
-  Public car park
-  Children's playground
-  Activity play area
-  Active sports
-  Lake feature
-  Camping ground
-  Structure/screen woodland
-  Ornamental landscape areas



Option 3 Proposals Plan

### OPTION 3

#### Main Features:

1. Public vehicle access at entrance adjacent to Rosemont School
2. Pedestrian/cycle access with feature gates and signage
3. Main public car park (hard surfaced), approx. 170 spaces
4. Service vehicle access
5. Building uses as Sheet 6.3
6. Kitchen garden
7. Active sports
8. Camping ground
9. Natural play area
10. Adventure play area, assault course, den building area, etc.
11. Main pedestrian route, with family activity circuit where shown
12. Family activity cycle circuit (2.5km approx.)
13. Ornamental lake
14. Sculpture Trail
15. Panoramic viewpoint
16. Passive recreation
17. MV cables under-grounded

#### Common Features:

- A. Hay meadow
- B. Rock garden and pools refurbished
- C. Orientation node (Broadwalk)
- D. Focal feature (Broadwalk)
- E. Woodland trails
- F. Right-of-Way upgraded (surface)
- G. Orientation point (Right-of-Way)
- H. Information point (Right-of-Way)

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.3 Building Use Options



<b>OPTION 1</b>
<b>Potential uses:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional functions; weddings venue; film set</li> </ul>
<b>OPTION 2</b>
<b>Potential uses:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scouting, horticulture and education</li> <li>Administration, research/archive rooms</li> <li>Short-stay accommodation (specialist visitor groups)</li> <li>Restaurant and visitor lounges</li> </ul>
<b>OPTION 3</b>
<b>Potential uses:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holistic Community Centre, Health Wellness, Holistic Medicine, Respite Care, Music/Performing Arts Centre, or similar</li> <li>Administration, practitioner/consultation rooms</li> <li>Accommodation (short-stay retreats)</li> <li>Large café and shop</li> </ul>

**Development Plan Zoning**  
(refer Section 2.1 for further details):  
The building falls within Zoning Objective F

Uses Permitted in Principle within Zone F include:  
*Community Facility, Cultural Use, Open Space, Sports Facility, Travellers Accommodation.*

Uses Open For Consideration within Zone F include:  
*Allotments, Carpark, Cemetery, Craft Centre/Craft Shop, Childcare Service, Crematorium, Education, Garden Centre/Plant Nursery, Golf Facility, Guest House, Place of Public Worship, Public Services, Tea Room/Cafe.*

**Fernhill House**

The suitable long-term use of the building needs to take account of its residential origins and the functional arrangement of rooms, as well as its historic character. The well-proportioned ground floor reception/dining rooms, combined with numerous smaller, self-contained rooms, suggest a multi-use solution of related services or activities.

A number of potential uses are proposed to reflect the range of facilities within each Spatial Option, ranging from occasional use for functions, through specialist use such as a Horticultural Centre (focussing on the legacy of William Robinson), to all-inclusive resort-type use for health, alternative medicine or music/performing arts.

For Options 2 and 3, it is proposed that the ground floor includes a restaurant and kitchen (catering for up to 70 persons), together with visitor lounges, while the upper floors could be utilised for short-stay accommodation for specialist visitor groups or for short-stay retreats (for up to 15 persons).

The Kitchen Garden could be integral to the function of the Main House by providing fresh, seasonal produce to the kitchen.

Although the building is in reasonable condition given the length of time it has been vacant, it is clear from preliminary inspection that extensive renovation will be necessary to suit the uses proposed. As noted in the Preliminary Architects Report<sup>(24)</sup>, this will entail new services, mechanical and electrical, including rewiring, fire and intruder alarms, new heating system, new kitchen and bathrooms, insulation, general building works and decoration.

As the building is a Protected Structure, permission will be required for alterations and repairs, and renovations will require to be carried out in accordance with conservation principles.



Hallway



Drawing room/lounge



South-eastern facade

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.3 Building Use Options



- KEY**
- Existing building refurbished
  - Existing building demolished and replaced
  - Kitchen garden reinstated

**Potential uses:**

- A. Staff cottage rebuilt as Horticultural Centre (Option 2) or Bunkhouse (Option 3)
- B. Stable block refurbished as shop/outlet
- C. Shed refurbished for storage (Options 1+2) or public toilets (Option 3)
- D. Coach house/garage refurbished for café and toilets (all Options)
- E. Park maintenance depot with sheds refurbished for storage and administration (all Options)
- F. Garden area refurbished as orchard with wild and cut-flowers and bee-keeping



- KEY**
- Life tenancy extents
  - Existing building use and structure retained
  - Existing building refurbished
  - Existing building demolished and replaced
  - Kitchen garden reinstated

**Potential uses:**

- A. Staff cottage rebuilt as Horticultural Centre (Option 2) or Bunkhouse (Option 3)
- B. Stable block refurbished as shop/outlet
- C. Shed refurbished for storage (Options 1+2) or public toilets (Option 3)

**OPTION 1**

**Potential uses:**

- Building group and courtyard used as park maintenance depot
- Kitchen garden reinstated - orchard, vegetables, soft fruit, herbs, salad crops, cut-flowers, bee keeping, etc.

**OPTION 2**

**Potential uses:**

- Horticultural Centre in refurbished Block A
- Café in refurbished Block D, including public toilets
- Gift shop/fresh produce outlet in refurbished Block B
- Machinery/equipment storage in refurbished Block C
- Kitchen garden reinstated as Option 1

**OPTION 3**

**Potential uses:**

- Bunkhouse accommodation in refurbished Block A (e.g. scouts, walkers)
- Café in refurbished Block D
- Gift shop/fresh produce outlet in refurbished Block B
- Public toilets in refurbished Block C
- Kitchen garden reinstated as Option 1

**Farmyard Complex**

The former farm buildings and kitchen garden form an interesting collection of structures that need to be incorporated in the overall proposals for the development of Fernhill as a Regional Park.

As with the main building, a number of potential uses for the farmyard complex are proposed to reflect the planned intensity of each Spatial Option, ranging from an interim park maintenance depot utilising the available southern buildings, through potential use as a Horticultural Centre and/or café/tea rooms, to higher intensity uses such as short-stay accommodation, gift shop and retail outlet.

In all options it is proposed that the Staff Cottage is replaced with a purpose-built structure. Also in all options, it is proposed that the kitchen gardens and glasshouses are reinstated, to complement the uses of the main building and as a visitor attraction, while the southern courtyard could be used for small farmers markets.

The northern group of buildings are within the extents of the life tenancy agreement, and they will need to remain in their current use for the short-term. In the longer-term they could be converted to use as a park maintenance depot with associated storage and administration uses.

The period gate lodge at the existing entrance could be retained in all options as park keeper accommodation and/or information centre.

As the outbuildings fall within the curtilage of a Protected Structure, permission will be required for alterations and repairs, and renovations will require to be carried out in accordance with conservation principles in order to retain and enhance the historical integrity of the group.



*Sensitive conversion of former stable buildings at Cabinteely Park for refreshment and community uses*



*Farmyard complex and kitchen garden as existing*

# 6. Outline Proposals

## 6.4 Options Appraisal

**OPTION 1**



**Assessment:**

Option 1 is intended to minimise the landscape and visual impacts of new development by catering for mostly passive recreation activities and the provision of a single natural play area. Vehicle access would be from the Rosemont School junction, leading to a low amount of car parking (approx. 60 spaces) arranged between tree groups along the north-west site boundary.

The use of the park would be mostly limited to specialist visitors with interest in the horticultural and architectural heritage aspects, and to leisure walkers content with the natural terrain.

The building uses would reflect the informal, low impact emphasis of the Option.

Whereas the Option respects the natural and built heritage of the park, it does not meet the recreation requirements for a Regional Park, due to the low number of visitors catered for (<200) and the limited range of facilities on offer.

**OPTION 2**



**Assessment:**

Option 2 increases the amount of recreational facilities by including active sports, an adventure play area and a family activity circuit. Vehicle access would be from a relocated roundabout on Enniskerry Road, with a moderate amount of parking spaces (approx. 120no.) located close to the new entrance.

The use of the park would be extended to include for the general public, specialist visitors and leisure walkers. The building uses would be expanded to suit the wider range of visitors to be catered for.

Whereas the Option increases the number of visitors catered for (<300) by offering additional parking and additional facilities, it does not achieve the full potential of the site as a Regional Park. The new entrance would be high profile, but the construction requirements could be prohibitive in terms of land-take and cost. To reduce the influence of vehicles within the most sensitive areas, the car park would need to be located close to the new entrance, resulting in high visual impact and the considerable loss of boundary features.

**OPTION 3 (PREFERRED)**



**Assessment:**

Option 3 maximises the amount of recreational facilities by including additional active sports and adventure play areas, the family activity circuit, a sculpture trail, potential camping grounds and an ornamental lake. Vehicle access would be from the Rosemont School junction, with a high amount of parking spaces (approx. 170no.) in a medium-low impact location that can be partly mitigated by woodland planting.

The two pedestrian access points would be emphasised (with gates and signage) to raise awareness of and promote alternative means of travel to the park.

Adequate provision would be made for the general public, specialist visitors and leisure walkers, and the circulation network integrated with the Right-of-Way.

The building uses would be further expanded to suit the wider range of visitors and for longer-term maintenance requirements.

The Option meets the objectives for a Regional Park by increasing the number of visitors catered for (<400) while safeguarding the natural and built heritage of the site.

### Meeting Project Aims and Objectives

Option 3 has been chosen by DLRCC as the preferred option as it best meets the project aims and objectives established at the commencement of the Feasibility Study (refer Section 1.1). These options, along with the entire Fernhill Park and Gardens Feasibility Study (and including the supporting studies) will inform the development of the Masterplan.

## Have Your Say

### Overview

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) undertook a non-statutory public consultation on Fernhill Park & Gardens from the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017. The consultation was an online consultation where submissions were invited from interested parties to have their say on the design and development of Fernhill prior to the development of the Masterplan. Comments/suggestions were submitted through the Councils online consultation hub, <https://dlrcoco.citizenspace.com/>.

As part of the process, some general information was provided in text format on the website with further supplementary information about Fernhill also provided in a PDF document.

As part of this process, DLRCC facilitated guided tours of Fernhill for members of the public on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Furthermore, DLRCC also undertook presentations followed by questions and answers in Sandyford Community Centre on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

### Masterplan

A Masterplan for the development of Fernhill Park & Gardens will be undertaken based on the findings of this report, further precedent studies and taking account of the submissions/observations from the public consultation process.

The masterplan should clearly set out and present the overall aspirations for Fernhill as a high quality Regional Park with a compatible range of active and passive recreational uses that are sympathetic to, and where possible, enhance the sensitive environmental setting.

Fernhill Park & Gardens should also become a model for sustainability with extensive opportunities for education and community participation.

### Management Plan

The future development of the park should also be fully informed by a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan that includes the findings and recommendations of current technical studies, including:

- Ecology Report in terms of protecting and enhancing the habitats of the site;
- Arboricultural Report in relation to tree removal and remedial works, and suitable replacement planting that secures the distinctive long-term tree cover;
- Historic Gardens Report for identifying and sustaining the unique plant collections of the site;
- Research Report - on the heritage importance of the buildings;
- Preliminary Engineering Report - setting out the physical and infrastructure constraints of the site; and
- Ground Investigation Report - in relation to sub-surface conditions.

### Urgent Operational Works

As described in the Ecological<sup>(8)</sup> and Arboricultural<sup>(9)</sup> and reports, the following operational works are required as a priority:

1. Tree Surgery Works (Priority 1,2)
2. Re-planting of Shelterbelts and Woodlands
3. Preserving the Plant Collections
4. Removal of Invasive Species

### Further Studies

As part of the more detailed designs for the park, a number of additional studies would be required that include:

1. Detailed Precedent Analysis
2. Renewable Energy Study
3. Buildings Condition Surveys
4. Hydrological Study
5. Detailed Study of the Plant Collections
6. Additional Ecological Studies (as outlined in the Ecological Report)
7. Structural Surveys of Walls and Bridges

These and other required studies can be undertaken following the completion or as part of the Masterplan process.

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