



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**

Part 8 Report

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Prepared by:

Eoin O'Brien, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent

Revision:

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1. Introduction

The following report is a summary of the main features of the proposed development of Fernhill as a Regional Public Park. A full and detailed analysis of the site has taken place, the findings of which are detailed in the Fernhill Park & Gardens Feasibility Report (appendix 3).

2. Site Location and Scope

The site – the subject of this Part 8 - is located to the south of the Enniskerry Road in Stepaside, County Dublin. The site outlined in red on drawing no. 2315-01 comprises of the estate known as Fernhill which is approximately 34 Hectares in size and includes existing gardens, woodlands, agricultural lands, public right-of-way, Fernhill House and ancillary buildings. The proposed development comprises of the development of Fernhill as a Regional Public Park. The site History & Context is covered in the Fernhill Park & Gardens Feasibility Report (appendix 3).

3. Planning Context:

3.1 Zoning:

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

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*".

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) – should read as Walkers Wood.

3.2 Policy:

The development of Fernhill as a Regional Public Park will tie in with the relevant national and regional policy as outlined in the County Development Plan 2010-2016 as well as the following specific policies;

Policy OSR1: Green Infrastructure Strategy

"It is Council policy to protect existing green infrastructure and encourage and facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of new green infrastructure, recognising the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the following; sustainable transport, provision of open space amenities, sustainable management of water, protection and management of biodiversity and protection of cultural and built heritage".

Policy OSR2: Open Space Strategy

Flagship Parks -

The Council adopted the Open Space Strategy, on the 13 February 2012.

Action 1 of the Strategy's Action Plan states:

"Deliver a programme of improvements to Flagship and Local Parks

Outcomes: improved accessibility and open spaces and recreational facilities of a higher quality"

Policy OSR3: Hierarchy of Parks & Open Space

"It is Council policy to provide 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, including people with mobility impairments, by being readily accessible and at a convenient distance from their home and/or places of work".

Policy OSR7: Trees & Woodlands

"It is Council policy to implement the objectives and policies of the Tree Strategy for the County - "dlr Trees 2011 – 2015" - to ensure that the tree cover in the County is managed and developed to optimise the environmental, climatic and educational benefits which derive from an 'urban forest'".

Policy OSR10: Sports & Recreational Facilities

"It is Council policy to ensure to promote the provision and management of high quality sporting and recreational infrastructure throughout the county and to ensure the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the planning and design of new facilities".

Policy OSR 14: Play Facilities

"It is Council policy to support the provision of structured and unstructured play areas with appropriate equipment and facilities throughout the county and to ensure the needs of all age groups and abilities – children, teenagers, adults and older people – are facilitated in the public parks of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown".

Policy LHB2: Preservation of 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), in accordance with the 'Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment' (2000) as issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention) and in accordance with 'A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – Strategy issue Paper for Consultation' 2011".

Policy LHB6: Views and Prospects:

"It is Council policy 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.

Policy LB14: Public Rights of Way:

"It is Council policy to preserve, protect, promote and improve for the common good all existing public rights-of-way which contribute to the general amenity"

Policy LHB25: Rivers & Waterways

"It is Council policy to maintain and protect the natural character and ecological value of the river and stream corridors in the County and where possible to enhance existing channels and to encourage diversity of habitat. It is also policy (subject to the sensitivity of the riverside habitat) to provide public access to riparian corridors to promote improved passive recreational activities".

Policy LHB32: Historic Demesnes and Gardens

"It is Council policy that such historic demesnes and gardens should be identified and protected to reflect and acknowledge their significance as part of the National Heritage. The following houses and gardens are listed: Cabintelly House, Marlay House, Fernhill and Old Conna".

Policy AR1: Record of Protected Structures

"It is Council policy to:

- i. Include those structures that are considered in the opinion of the Planning Authority to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social interest in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).
- ii. Protect Structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance.
- iii. Ensure that any development proposals to Protected Structures, their curtilage and setting shall have regard to the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2011).
- iv. Ensure that new and adapted uses are compatible with the character and special interest of the Protected Structure".

Policy AR2: Protected Structures Applications and Documentation

"It is Council Policy to require all planning applications relating to Protected Structures to contain the appropriate level of documentation in accordance with Article 23 (2) Planning Regulations and Chapter 6 and Appendix B of the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, or any variation thereof".

Policy AR3: Protected Structures and Building Regulations

"It is Council Policy to protect the character and special interest of Protected Structures when considering or carrying out intervention to comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations – with particular reference to Part B and Part M".

Policy AR4: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

"It is Council Policy to review and update the RPS on foot of any Ministerial recommendations following the completion of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)".

Policy AR5: Buildings of Heritage Interest

"It is Council policy to:

- i. Retain where appropriate, and encourage the rehabilitation and suitable reuse of existing older buildings/structures/features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a streetscape in preference to their demolition and redevelopment and to preserve surviving shop and pub fronts of special historical or architectural interest including signage and associated features.
- ii. Identify buildings of vernacular significance with a view to assessing them for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures".

Policy AR6: Protection of Buildings in Council Ownership

"It is Council Policy to continue to demonstrate the best practice with regard to Protected Structures, Recorded Monuments and often elements of architectural heritage in its ownership and care".

Policy AR7: Energy Efficiency of Protected Structures

"It is Council Policy to have regard to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's publication on 'Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings' and any future advisory documents in assessing proposed works on Protected Structures".

3.3 Strategy:

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council has adopted the following additional strategies that are pertinent to the proposed development:

dlr Green Infrastructure Strategy:

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, Appendix 14 of the Development Plan, 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.

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.

dlr Open Space Strategy:

The strategy aims to provide 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.

dlr Trees – A Tree Strategy for Dun laoghaire Rathdown 2011-2015:

This strategy aims to standardise and guide the Council's approach to trees throughout the county, provide clarity to actions and decisions, and encourage balanced consideration of individual expectations, public amenity and best practice.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Age Friendly Strategy 2016 – 2020:

This strategy requires that design of outdoor spaces and buildings to be age friendly and inclusive. As the site is in a mountainous part of the county, the design of the access, car parking and circulation network has been carefully considered. Given the steep nature of the park, the path network has been designed to ensure multiple seating and resting places with handrails being incorporated on steps and steep ramps. The seating areas will be age friendly in design incorporating multiple arm rests and signage will also be carefully considered. During the detail design stage, additional age friendly initiatives will be explored such as sensory spaces, memory/history trails, etc.

4. Nature & Extent of the Proposed Development:

The existing Fernhill estate is to be developed as a Regional Public Park to include new entrances, both pedestrian and vehicular from the Enniskerry Road and Rosemont School, roads, car parking, active recreation, play, paths with seating/resting areas, woodland walks, gardens, ponds and wetlands, meadows, new boundaries, restoration of existing Coach House as a park tearooms, demolition of 1970s bungalow, new tower building for use as public toilets and staff/community facilities, new sports building, new dwelling unit, community garden and all ancillary civil, building and landscaping works with some works within the curtilage of the Protected Structure (Fernhill House). The nature and extent of the proposed development is outlined below. This description of the proposed works should be read in conjunction with the supporting drawings and reports.

Entrances:

- New vehicular entrance shared with Rosemont School.
- Existing entrance on the Enniskerry Road to be upgraded for pedestrian use and occasional vehicular use.
- New pedestrian entrance off the Enniskerry Road in close proximity to the roundabout at Belarmine.

Boundaries:

- Deer proof timber post and steel mesh fencing along the southern, eastern and western boundaries.
- New mesh fencing with gates to match either side of the right of way.
- New piers, steel gates and railings to all entrances for visual permeability and prominence.
- Boundaries to be planted with a suitable screening mix where appropriate.

Shared Surface Avenue:

- Shared surface avenue along the western boundary up to the Road Field incorporating pinch points and ramps.
- Informal car park for approximately 44 cars west of the access road in close proximity to the boundary of Rosemont School.
- Pathway to a pedestrian gate on the boundary with Rosemont School for direct access. Control of this gate will be by Rosemont School in accordance with the parks opening hours.
- Informal coach parking alongside the shared surface avenue.

Road Field:

- Car park for approximately 49 cars along the northern boundary screened from the south with woodland planting. The required quantity of electrical charge points will also be included at appropriate locations.
- Shared surface plaza with sculptural focal point to act as turning circle. Shared surface road linking to the 9 Acre Field.
- Extensive cut and fill of the existing ground to create the formal active recreation area. Low retaining walls south of the car park area with terracing of slopes south of the active recreation area for viewing.
- Steps to provide access with a long children's slide on the slope with stair lift incorporated in design for disabled access.
- Sports building and viewing area with storage for equipment and goals (see further details below).
- Formal grass active recreation space (approx. 11,750 sq. m) with sand capping for intensive use suitable for multiple sports and games.
- Two lane running track around the active recreation area (400m long).
- Circuitous route around the field including a flat viewing space with extensive seating. Bridge linking the Road Field to the 9 Acre Field to the south.
- Woodland screen planting to boundaries.

9 Acre Field:

- Car park for approximately 70 cars including a minimum of 7 no. disabled spaces along the northern boundary screened to the south by mounding and tree planting.
- Area directly south of the car park to be a playful landscape incorporating grass mounds, sculpture, ornamental planting, toddler play area as well as small wind turbines.
- Perimeter path network with open grassland, grass meadow, screen planting and dogs-off-leash areas for large and small dogs.
- Two bridges linking to the Wood Field.

Wood Field:

- Weir constructed to form a linear pond with spill over wetland to attenuate in flash flooding events.
- Wide path at the north of the field to incorporate extensive linear seating.
- Perimeter path network with links to gardens and right of way.
- Grass meadows, tree and woodland screen planting.
- Historic stone lined water channel to be exposed in the field.

- Long linear flying fox following the slope to the south of the field.
- Additional shelterbelt planting alongside existing woodlands.

Woodland:

- Boardwalk path network to be put in place with extensive seating, resting and viewing areas - to also act as outdoor classrooms. Movement of pedestrians off the boardwalk to be restricted in certain locations to protect the forest floor and ecology.
- Old woodland tracks to be retained and restored for pedestrian and maintenance access.
- Native woodland planting to be introduced at appropriate locations.
- Opportunities for a small orienteering course to be explored as well as an area for den building.
- Firebreak to be put in place along the southern boundary under the 220 kva power lines.

Broadwalk & Gardens:

- The gardens including the plant collections, existing Broadwalk and garden trails to be restored in a sustainable manner. New tree and shrub planting to be introduced at appropriate locations to improve overall visitor experience. Ornamental gardens to be managed as semi-natural wild, in line with the Robinsonian Wild style of gardening.
- New boardwalk path network with extensive seating, resting and viewing areas. The boardwalk will improve access around the gardens and address steep falls and existing steep circulation through the gardens. Movement of pedestrians off the boardwalk to be restricted to protect the sensitive parts of the gardens.
- Low timber and steel fencing to be put in place around the gardens with gates at appropriate locations. The fencing will act to ensure the gardens are protected while retaining their existing tranquil feel. Dogs will be not be allowed in the gardens.
- Opportunities for permanent and temporary sculpture to be considered throughout the gardens. A focal point at the end of Broadwalk to be put in place to address its current abrupt ending.

Meadow:

- New path network to follow the line of the historic roadway parallel to the Enniskerry Road with links to the Avenue and house. Extensive linear seating to be put in place to take advantage of the aspect.
- Additional woodland screen planting to be introduced along the northern boundary.
- Species rich grasslands to be managed by light natural grazing for 2-3 months of the year with steel fence in place. During the remaining parts of the year, grass tracks will be cut through the meadows and picnic tables may be placed in appropriate locations.
- Natural wetland area to the west to be maintained and managed as same.
- Existing carpark to be removed with planting and grassland extended.

Ornamental Gardens - West of Avenue:

- The ornamental gardens including the plant collections and garden trails to be restored in a sustainable manner. New tree and shrub planting to be introduced at appropriate locations to improve overall visitor experience. Ornamental gardens to be managed as semi-natural wild, in line with the Robinsonian Wild style of gardening.

Kitchen Garden:

- Kitchen Gardens to be managed as community gardens where local people learn to grow fruit and vegetables while also maintaining some of the more ornamental aspects of the gardens.
- Access to certain parts of the Kitchen Gardens will be restricted to the public except for pre-determined times.
- Existing glass houses and buildings to be restored for horticultural use.

Right of Way:

- The Right of Way will be upgraded in line with the upgrade of the paths in the Three Rock Mountains using locally sourced and naturally occurring materials.
- Some orientation points and information to be put in place along its route.
- Direct links and access will be provided to and from the Right of Way into the park and gardens through gates which will be open during park opening times. The Right of Way will remain open at all times.

Drainage:

- The drainage has been designed in accordance with the GSDSDS with attenuation in soft areas where possible. Surface water design has been undertaken using best practice and integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems in order to replicate the natural characteristics of rainfall run-off from the proposed development. As well as attenuating the water on site, the quality of the surface water will be improved while also providing an amenity through good quality integrated design.
- The Surface water drainage design primarily relates to the new shared surface avenue, the Road Field and the 9 Acre Field. From sample boreholes in this area, the ground percolation appears to be good. Hard standing areas have been designed to be permeable where possible and allow natural infiltration into the ground. For non-permeable paving, surface water run-off has been designed to be directed towards the soft landscape areas, swales and filter drains where it will naturally infiltrate into the ground. Some storage attenuation zones are also proposed in order to reduce the run-off from the site.
- The remaining parts of the site will naturally infiltrate into the ground as they do so at present.
- Rain water harvesting will take place around all buildings for watering trees and shrubs.

Play:

- Main natural adventure play space to be developed in the old orchard area of the park. Its setting in an existing clearance in the woods with the stream alongside and with its proximity to main park facilities makes it the ideal location. The play space will include some adventurous and challenging play units while always encouraging free and natural play using existing resources on site.
- Small fenced off toddler play area to be developed in close proximity.
- Further natural play will be encouraged throughout by strategically placing suitable items which will encourage free play and exploration of nature and the environment.

Outdoor Exercise Equipment:

- Outdoor exercise equipment to be strategically placed in the most appropriate location(s) to encourage physical activity which will be suitable for all age

groups. This will have an energy generating component which will tie into the overall Sustainability Strategy.

Existing Buildings:

- The existing Gate-Lodge just off the Enniskerry Road is currently in use as a residence for a member of staff. It is envisaged that this use as a residence will be maintained.
- The existing Coach House building in the middle of the site is being developed as a tearooms/café. The building is to be upgraded, conserved and restored with a modest extension to the west. The ground floor will incorporate a servery and a seating area with a double height space. Staff preparation and other facilities will be situated on the 1st floor mezzanine above the servery area.
- The existing Bungalow building opposite the Coach House is to be demolished and a new building put in place on or close to its existing footprint.
- The existing building to the east of the bungalow will be upgraded and renovated for use as a shop or community facility.
- The existing shed/store buildings will be retained for storage and locating plant as required.
- The development of Fernhill House is outside of the scope of this Part 8. It is envisaged that this will be developed for a wide community use – subject to extensive studies and a further Part 8.

Proposed Buildings:

- New Tower building on or close to the footprint of the existing bungalow. This building will be a contemporary design responding to its setting and location. It will incorporate public toilets, staff facilities, community facilities and external seating/viewing areas.
- New sports building at the upper level of the active recreation space. This building will be a contemporary design incorporating timber cladding and a green roof. This building consists of changing rooms, bag store, toilets (accessible externally) with a storage cage alongside for goals, etc.
- New modest eco-type residential unit located below an existing barn structure to the north of the Coach House.

All new buildings will be designed to meet with the requirements of the Near Zero Energy Building standards and will tie in with the overall Sustainability Strategy.

Services:

- Existing low voltage overhead power lines as well as other overhead lines throughout the estate to be undergrounded.
- New watermain, sewage, and ducting for electricity, fibre and utilities to be laid on the existing avenue and new shared surface avenue.
- New low voltage LED lighting columns will be put in place along the new shared surface avenue and in the car park in the 9 Acre Field. Additional bollard lights will be put in place from the car park to Fernhill House along the accessible path.
- Should a small sub-station be required, this will be located along the new avenue and screened from view where possible.

Area Under Lifetime Tenancy:

- This area will be developed as a staff depot yard upon completion of the lifetime tenancy agreement.

Other:

- Extensive bicycle parking (included some covered parking) to be put in place at the entrances and car parks and in close proximity to the proposed tearooms.
- Ducting for fibre will be put in place in order to develop the park as a Smart Park.
- Sensory spaces to be developed in appropriate locations along with age friendly initiatives.
- Opportunities for permanent or temporary sculpture to be reviewed at detail design stage.

5. Design:

A design statement has been developed in order to explain further the decision making and justification for the development of the design for Fernhill Park & Gardens. The Design Statement is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report.

6. Environmental Impact Assessment Screening:

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report is required in order to form an opinion whether or not the proposed development should be subject to

an EIA, and if so, whether an EIA Report should be prepared in respect of it. The EIA screening report concludes that there is no requirement for an EIA to be carried out and no requirement for an EIA Report to be prepared. The EIA screening report has been undertaken by CAAS Ltd and is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report.

7. Appropriate Assessment – Screening Statement:

The proposed development is subject to the Guidance for Planning Authorities on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, November 2009) and S.I. No. 476 of 2011 Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2011. This requires that screening is carried out for all projects to examine if any impacts are likely on Natura 2000 Sites, that is, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). A Screening Report has been prepared by Faith Wilson Ecological Consultants (June 2017) which concluded that a full Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment is not required. Therefore, in accordance with SI 476, 2011, Section 250, Planning and Development (Amendment) No. 3 Regulations 2011, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council has determined that an Appropriate Assessment is not required. The AA Screening Report is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report.

8. Sustainability:

A preliminary Sustainability Strategy has been developed in order to set out our initial vision and concept for the sustainability of the site. The Sustainability Strategy is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report.

9. Conservation:

A Conservation Report has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of the proposed development on the protected structure and its curtilage. The Conservation Report is included as an appendix to the main Part 8 report.

Reports:

Appendix 1: Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Appendix 2: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Appendix 3: Feasibility Study

Appendix 4: Have Your Say Report

Appendix 5: Design Statement

Appendix 6: Sustainability Strategy

Appendix 7: Ecology & Horticulture Report

Appendix 8: Tree Survey & Report

Appendix 9: Conservation Report

Appendix 10: Road Safety Audit

Drawings:

Landscape Architecture (DLR Parks & Nicholas de Jong Associates):

- 2315-01 - Location Plan
- 2315-02 - Outline Design - Overall
- 2315-03 - Layout Map 1
- 2315-04 - Layout Map 2
- 2315-05 - Layout Map 3
- 2315-06 - Rosemont Entrance – Detailed Plan
- 2315-07 - Pedestrian Entrances – Detailed Plan
- 2315-08 – Surface Water Drainage Plan
- 2315-09 – Proposed Services Plan
- 2315-15 - Cross Sections
- 2315-16 - Representative Images
- 2315-25 – Indicative Details - Boundaries
- 2315-26 – Indicative Details - Drainage & Surfaces

Architecture (DLR Architects):

- 2315-35 – Coach House - Existing
- 2315-36 – Bungalow – Existing to be Demolished
- 2315-37 – Proposed Dwelling
- 2315-38 – Coach House – Proposed Restoration & Extension
- 2315-39 – Proposed Tower Building
- 2315-40 – Out Buildings – Proposed Restoration
- 2315-41 – Proposed Sports Pavilion