Our Case Number: ABP-317809-23

An Bord Pleanála

Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae
James Fintan Lalor Avenue
Portlaoise
Co. Laois
R32 EHP9

Date: 24 October 2023

Re: Proposed Coolglass windfarm and related works
In the townlands of Fossy Upper, Aghoney, Gorreelagh, Knocklead, Scotland, Brennanshill, Monamantry, Coolglass, Crissard and Kylenabehy, Co. Laois.

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

The Board will revert to you in due course in respect of this matter.

Please be advised that copies of all submissions / observations received in relation to the application will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the local authority and at the offices of An Bord Pleanála when they have been processed by the Board.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Board's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in the meantime, please contact the undersigned officer of the Board or email sids@pleanala.ie quoting the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Evan McGuigan
Executive Officer
Direct Line:

PA09

Teil	**Tel**	(01) 858 8100
Glao Áitiúil	**LoCall**	1800 275 175
Facs	**Fax**	(01) 872 2684
Láithreán Gréasáin	**Website**	www.pleanala.ie
Ríomhphost	**Email**	bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Evan McGuigan

From: Bord
Sent: Tuesday 24 October 2023 09:50
To: Marine
Subject: FW: SID - Coolglass Windfarm Ltd. Your Ref: ABP-317809-23
Attachments: SIDCoolglassWindfarmLimited.pdf; SIDCoolglassWindfarmLimitedMaps.pdf; CertifiedExtractofMinuteCoolglassWindfarmLimited.pdf; 163331_scan_23102023.pdf

Importance: High

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Evelyn Brownrigg <ebrownri@laoiscoco.ie>
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 4:45 PM
To: Bord <bord@pleanala.ie>
Cc: Derek Kelly <Derek.Kelly@pleanala.ie>
Subject: SID - Coolglass Windfarm Ltd. Your Ref: ABP-317809-23
Importance: High

A Chara,

Please find attached letter dated the 23rd October 2023 together with supporting documents.

Regards

Evelyn Brownrigg,
Administrative Officer,
Planning Department,
Laois County Council

Áras an Chontae | Portlaoise | Co. Laois |
E: ebrownri@laoiscoco.ie T: +353 (0) 57 8664032
W: www.laois.ie

teachtaireacht seo nó aon chuid di a léamh, a phriontáil, a choinneáil, a chóipeáil nó a scaipeadh. Má tá an ríomhphost seo faighte agat trí dhearmad iarraimid ort fógra a thabhairt dúinn trí ríomhphost freagartha agus gach cóip den teachtaireacht a scriosadh.

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE
LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

Áras an Chontae
Portlaoise,
Co Laois
R32 EHP9

Planning Ref. No. 23/317809

Your Ref: ABP-317809-23

An Bord Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

23rd October, 2023

Applicant: Coolglass Windfarm Limited

Development: Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 37E of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (As Amended)
Construct 13 No. wind turbines within two clusters with overall ground to blade tip height of 180m.The wind turbines will have a rotordiameter ranging from 155m to 162m inclusive & a hub height ranging from 99 to 102.5m inclusive. Construct permanent turbine hardstands & turbine foundations. Construct 1 no. permanent 110 kV electrical substation including 2 no. control buildings with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing, gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, & all ancillary structures & works. Construct a 33kV collector cable circuit connecting the wind farm two clusters along the L3851/Knocklead Road. Construct 2 temporary construction compounds with associated temporary site offices, parking areas & security fencing. Develop 1 on-site borrow pit. Construct new permanent internal site access roads, upgrade existing internal site access roads, including passing bays & all associated drainage infrastructure .Develop an internal site drainage network & sediment control systems. All associated underground electrical & communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the wind farm substation. All associated site development works including berms, landscaping, & soil excavation. Improve site entrance to an existing access off the L3851/Knocklead local road to include localised widening of the road and creation of asplayed entrance to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads & turbine component deliveries. Improvements include; removal of existing vegetation for visibility splays to facilitate use of the access for delivery of construction materials to site. A new site entrance slip road from L3851 / Knocklead local road to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads & turbine component deliveries. Works at this location require removal of existing forestry to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to site & for use during the operational phase. Construct related temporary upgrade works on the turbine delivery route to facilitate, delivery of turbine components to include the use of temporary road surfaces at roundabout at southern exit of Junction 16 of M7, the R425/N80 roundabout & the R426-L3851

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE
LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

Áras an Chontae
Portlaoise,
Co Laois
R32 EHP9

junction. Erection of a permanent meteorological mast 102.5m in height. A 35-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire proposed development. This application is accompanied by EIAR & NIS

Location: Fossy Upper, Aghoney, Gorreelagh, Knocklead, Scotland, Brennanshill, Monamantry, Coolglass, Crissard, Kylenabehy, Monamanry, Brennanshill,Knocklead, Aghoney, Timahoe, Carrigeen, Ballygormill South, Money Upper, Hophall, Rathleague, Ballymooney, Rathbrennan, Co. Laois

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed the following;

- The Chief Executive's Report dated 22/09/2023 to the Elected Members of Laois County Council as required by Section 37E (4) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended.
- Extract from the minutes of the September meeting of Laois County Council held on the 25th September 2023
- SID Coolglass Windfarm Limited Maps

Should you require anything further or have any queries around the response supplied by Laois County Council, please do not hesitate to contact Nathan Smith Senior Executive Planner on nsmith@laoiscoco.ie who is dealing with this matter.

Is mise, le meas,

Administrative Officer
Planning
planning@laoiscoco.ie

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

PLANNING REPORT

ABP REFERENCE:
ABP- 317809-23

LCC PLANNING REF:
23/317809

Report to Elected Members as required by Section 37E(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Applicant Name:	Coolglass Windfarm Limited
Development Description:	Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 37E of The Planning and Development Act 2000 (As Amended) In accordance with Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, we, Coolglass Wind Farm Limited, give notice of our intention to make an application to An Bord Pleanála for a ten - year permission, for development comprising the construction of a wind farm and related works in the townlands of Fossy Upper, Aghoney, Gorreelagh, Knocklead, Scotland, Brennanshill, Monamantry, Coolglass, Crissard, Kylenabehy, Monamanry, Brennanshill, Knocklead, Aghoney, Timahoe, Carrigeen, Ballygormill South, Money Upper, Hophall, Rathleague, Ballymooney, Rathbrennan, County Laois. The site is 74.5 ha in size. The development will consist of: • Construction of 13 No. wind turbines within two clusters with an overall ground to blade tip height of 180m. The wind turbines will have a rotor diameter ranging from 155m to 162m inclusive and a hub height ranging from 99 to 102.5m inclusive. • Construction of permanent turbine hardstands and turbine foundations. • Construction of 1 no. permanent 110 kV electrical substation including 2 no. control buildings with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing and gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, and all ancillary structures and works. • Construction of a 33kV collector cable circuit connecting the wind farm two clusters along the L3851/Knocklead Road

	• Construction of two temporary construction compounds with associated temporary site offices, parking areas and security fencing • Development of one on-site borrow pit. • Construction of new permanent internal site access roads, upgrade of existing internal site access roads, including passing bays and all associated drainage infrastructure • Development of an internal site drainage network and sediment control systems. • All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the wind farm substation. • All associated site development works including berms, landscaping, and soil excavation • Improvement of a site entrance to an existing access off the L3851/Knocklead local road to include localised widening of the road and creation of a splayed entrance to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries. Improvements include removal of existing vegetation for visibility splays to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to the site. • A new site entrance slip road from the L3851 / Knocklead local road to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries. • Works at this location require the removal of existing forestry to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to the site and for use during the operational phase. • Construction related temporary upgrade works on the turbine delivery route to facilitate the delivery of turbine components to include the use of temporary road surfaces at a roundabout at the southern exit of Junction 16 of the M7, the R425/N80 roundabout and the R426 – L3851 junction. • The erection of a permanent meteorological mast 102.5m in height • A 35-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire proposed development. This application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Contents

1.0 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is in accordance with the requirements of Section 37E (4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended (the Act) is to set out the views of the Planning Authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, with particular regard to the matters specified in section 34(2) namely:

i) The provision of the Development Plan
ii) The provision of any special amenity area order relation to the area
iii) Any European site or other area prescribed for the purposes of Section 10(2) (c)
iv) Where relevant, the policy of the Government, The Minister or any Minister of the Government
v) The matters referred to in subsection (4) (i.e. conditions)
vi) Any other relevant provision or requirement of this act and any regulations made thereunder.

The Planning Authority can also submit a list of recommended conditions to be attached in the event of the Board granting planning permission. In addition, this report has been informed by the following guidance documents- *'7th Schedule Strategic Infrastructure Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* and the OPR's *Strategic Infrastructure Development.*

Section 37E(4) of the 2000 Act requires that this report shall be submitted to An Bord Pleanála by **5.30pm on the 23rd October 2023**. Section 37E(5) requires that before this report is submitted to the Board, the Chief Executive shall submit it to the elected members in order to seek their views on the proposed development.

The members may, by resolution, decide to attach recommendations to the report (Section 37E (6) of the 200 Act refers).

2.0 Planning Application Submission

The planning application includes the following information, which, where necessary, is cross referred in this report:

- Planning Application Form
- Site Notice
- Newspaper Notice
- Letters of Consent
- EIA Portal Confirmation Notice
- Drawings
- Planning Application Notification Letter to Laois County Council
- Planning Application Notification Letter to each Prescribed Body
- Planning Application Drawings
- Planning Statement
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
    - Volume I – Non Technical Summary
    - Volume II – Main Report (including 18no. Chapters)

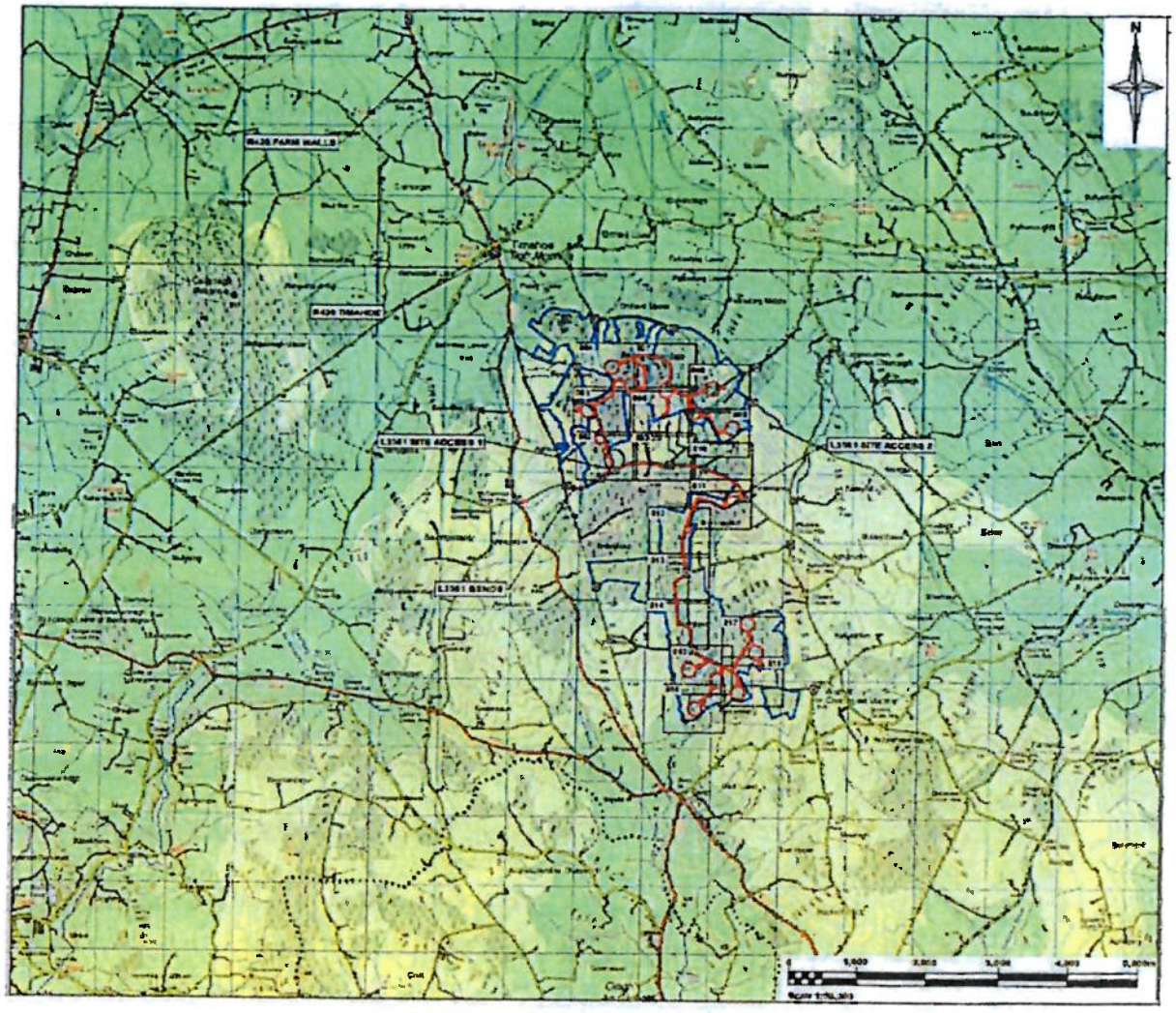
- Volume III – Annexes, including technical data and reports in support of Volume II
- Volume IV– Photomontages

- Natura Impact Assessment Report (NIS).

3.0 Site Location

The subject site is located to the south east of Portlaoise, within the vicinity of the main towns and villages of Timahoe, Swan, Wolfhill, Newtown, Ballinakill, Stradbally, Athy, Carlow, Portlaoise, and Abbeyleix.

The site spans Fossy Mountain and Wolfhill, northeast of Swan and southeast of Timahoe. The site is located in predominantly forestry plantation and agricultural lands, with elevations within the site ranging from 196 m to 325 m above sea level.



The Proposed Development is divided into two areas identified as the northern cluster and the southern cluster. The northern cluster of the Proposed Development is characterised by elevated lands with elevations between 285 – 325m with moderate to steep slopes to the west and north of the site boundary.

The southern portion of the proposed development site (Wolfhill) is characterised by elevated lands with elevations between 196 – 300 m above sea level, with moderate to gentle slopes down to the north and west throughout the site boundary.

The site is accessible from both the north and the south via the R526 Regional Road which is located to the west of the Proposed Development between the M7 Motorway and the N78 National Road.

4.0 The Proposed Development

4.1 Description of Development

The description of the proposed development as per the Site Notice to An Bord Pleanála is as follows:

In accordance with Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, we, Coolglass Wind Farm Limited, give notice of our intention to make an application to An Bord Pleanála for a ten - year permission, for development comprising the construction of a wind farm and related works in the townlands of Fossy Upper, Aghoney, Gorreelagh, Knocklead, Scotland, Brennanshill, Monamantry, Coolglass, Crissard, Kylenabehy, Monamanry, Brennanshill, Knocklead, Aghoney, Timahoe, Carrigeen, Ballygormill South, Money Upper, Hophall, Rathleague, Ballymooney, Rathbrennan, County Laois. The site is 74.5 ha in size. The development will consist of:

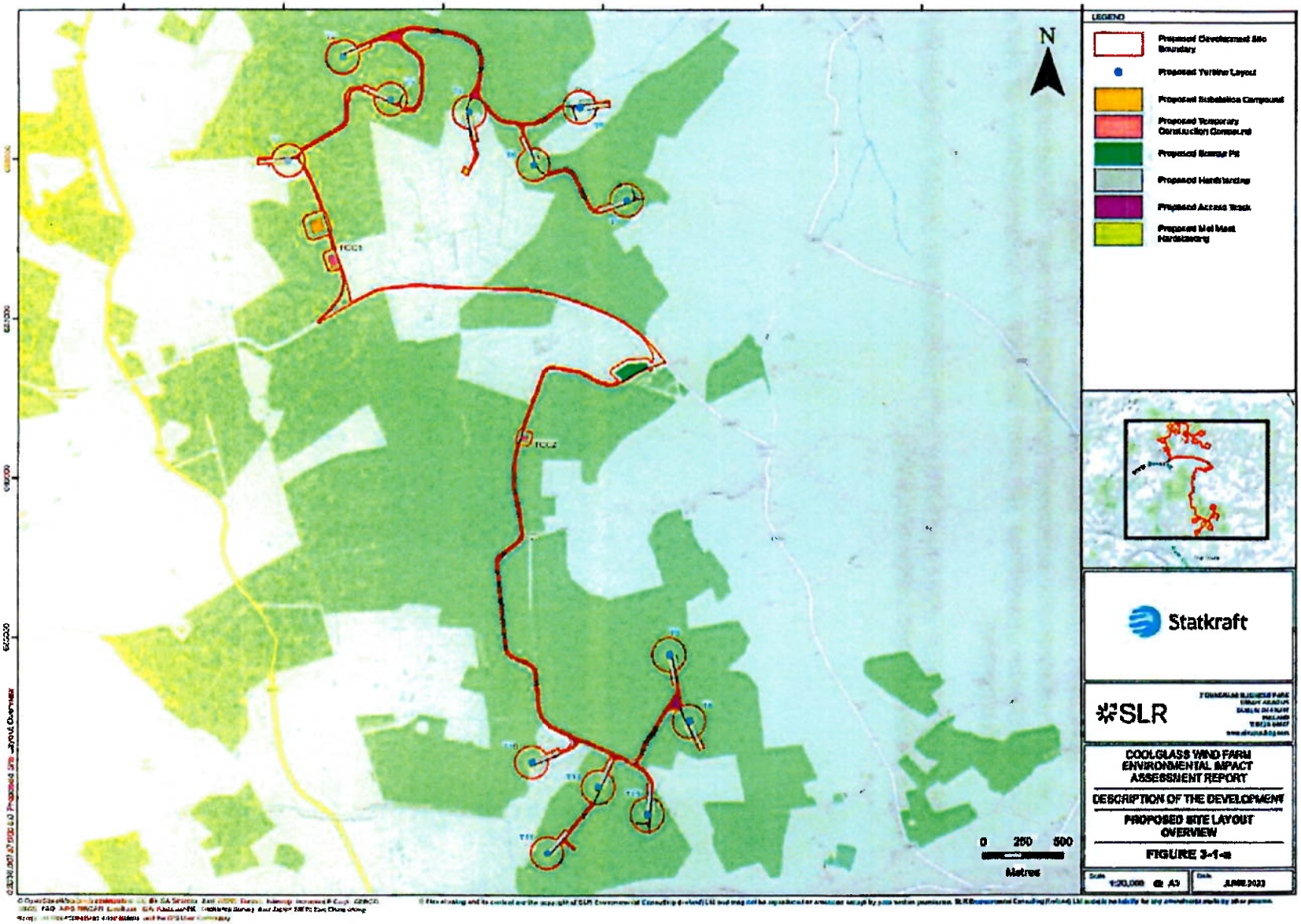
- *Construction of 13 No. wind turbines within two clusters with an overall ground to blade tip height of 180m. The wind turbines will have a rotor diameter ranging from 155m to 162m inclusive and a hub height ranging from 99 to 102.5m inclusive.*
- *Construction of permanent turbine hardstands and turbine foundations.*
- *Construction of 1 no. permanent 110 kV electrical substation including 2 no. control buildings with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing and gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, and all ancillary structures and works.*
- *Construction of a 33kV collector cable circuit connecting the wind farm two clusters along the L3851/Knocklead Road*
- *Construction of two temporary construction compounds with associated temporary site offices, parking areas and security fencing*
- *Development of one on-site borrow pit.*
- *Construction of new permanent internal site access roads, upgrade of existing internal site access roads, including passing bays and all associated drainage infrastructure*
- *Development of an internal site drainage network and sediment control systems.*
- *All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the wind farm substation.*
- *All associated site development works including berms, landscaping, and soil excavation*

- *Improvement of a site entrance to an existing access off the L3851/Knocklead local road to include localised widening of the road and creation of a splayed entrance to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries. Improvements include removal of existing vegetation for visibility splays to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to the site.*
- *A new site entrance slip road from the L3851 / Knocklead local road to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries.*
- *Works at this location require the removal of existing forestry to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to the site and for use during the operational phase.*
- *Construction related temporary upgrade works on the turbine delivery route to facilitate the delivery of turbine components to include the use of temporary road surfaces at a roundabout at the southern exit of Junction 16 of the M7, the R425/N80 roundabout and the R426 – L3851 junction.*
- *The erection of a permanent meteorological mast 102.5m in height*
- *A 35-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire proposed development.*

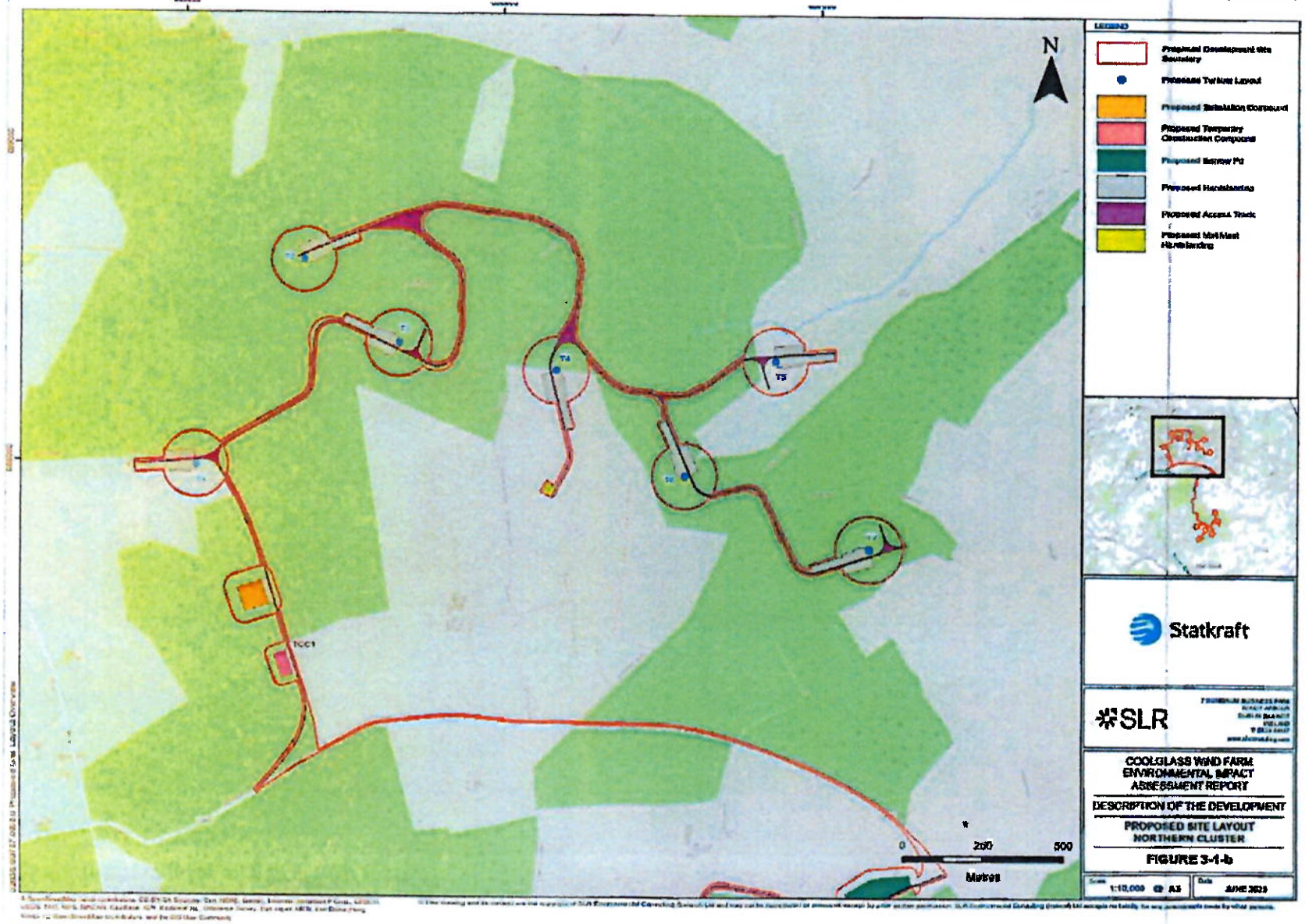
This application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

4.2 Site Layout

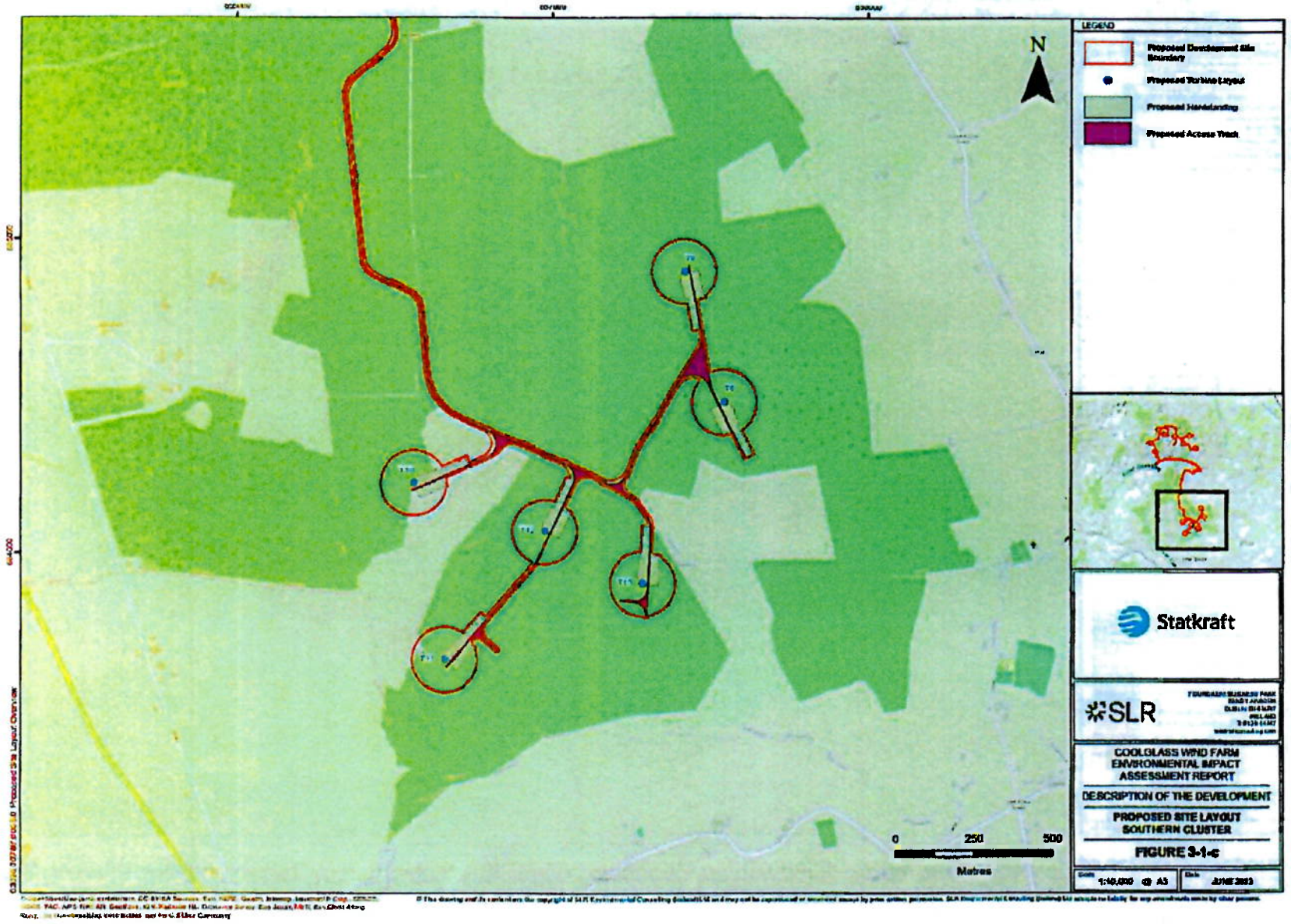
The 13no. wind turbines are proposed in two clusters, namely a northern and southern cluster.



The northern cluster includes 7no. turbines, substation compound, hardstanding areas, temporary construction compound, borrow pit.

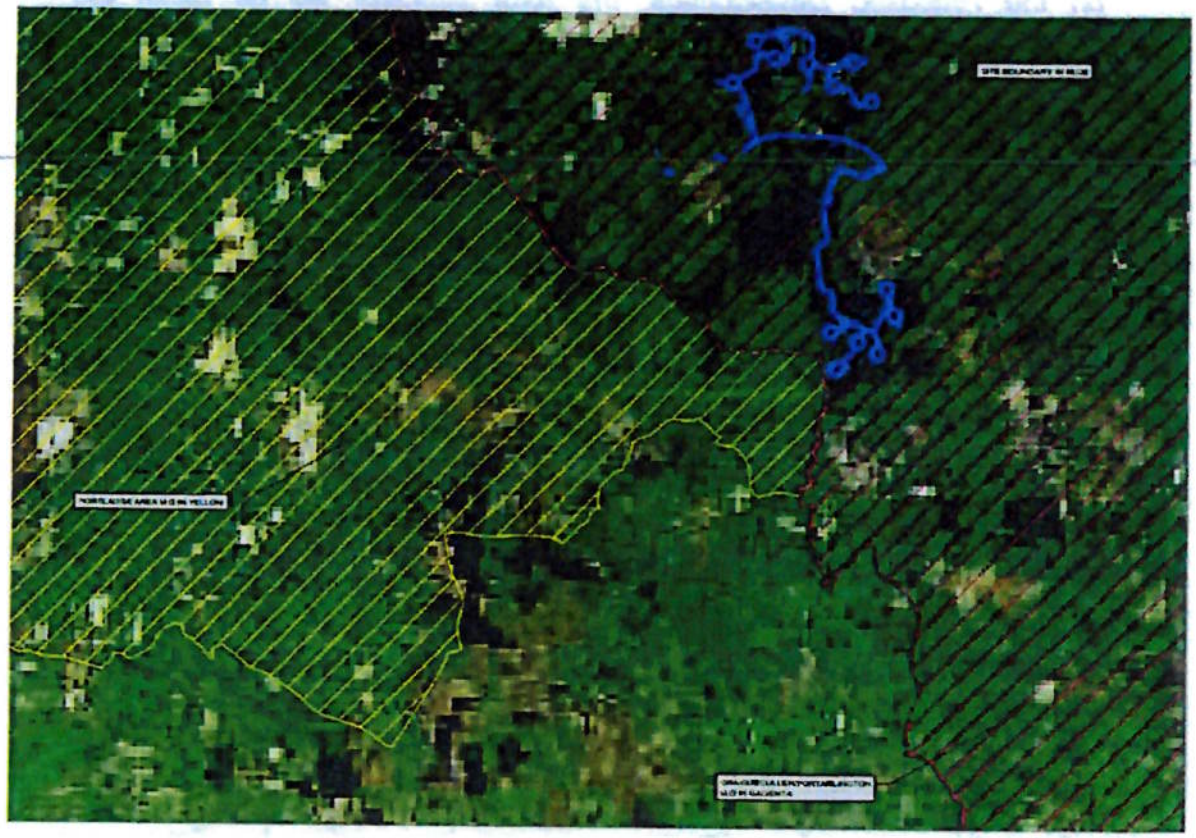


The southern cluster includes 6no. turbines, access track and hardstanding areas.



4.3 Proposed Development within Municipal Districts

The following plan shows the proposed development overlaid on the Muncipal District plan. It shows that the proposed development is within the Graiguecullen / Portarlington Municipal District.



4.4 Design Flexibility

Section 2.4 of the Planning Report submitted with the application states that the time it takes to get from planning submission to the procurement stage post consent, grid connection offer and route to market can take anywhere up to 6 to 7 years which is also why a ten year planning permissions are sought for Wind Farm developments.

The Planning Report states *at this stage any exact dimensions set out in a planning application and associated grant of permission may no longer fully apply. For this reason, the Applicant (Coolglass Wind Farm Limited) is requesting a specific design envelope to be consented to avoid a requirement to amend the application at procurement stage.*

As the exact specification of turbine will not be available at the time of lodging this application the applicant is therefore requesting a specific design envelope to be consented in line with the judgment of Judge Humphreys on the 16/6/2021 in Sweetman v An Bord Pleanala & Ors [2021] IEHC 390.

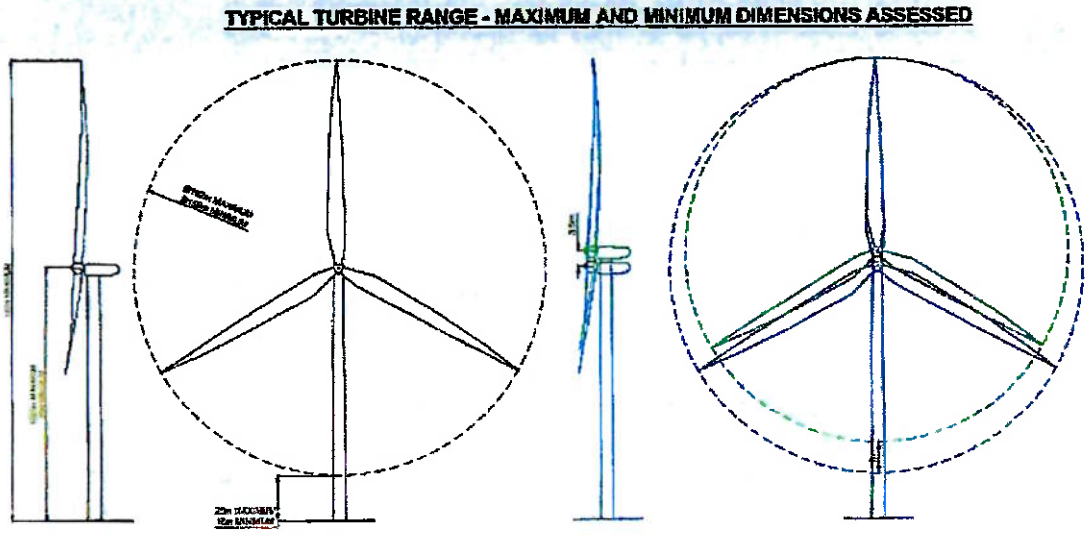
The Planning Report states that the design flexibility that is sought as part of the Proposed Development is not open ended and will comprise the following range:

- *Tip Height: overall ground to blade tip height of 180m inclusive. We confirm that regardless of turbine type used on the Proposed Development site, the overall tip height will be 180m*
- *Rotor Diameter: The wind turbines will have a rotor diameter ranging from 155m to 162m inclusive. We confirm that regardless of turbine type used on the Proposed Development, the rotor diameter will be within the parameters of 155m to 162m.*
- *Hub Height: a hub height ranging from 99 to 102.5m inclusive- We confirm that regardless of turbine type used on the Proposed Development site, the hub height will be within the parameters of 99-102.5m.*

4.5 Turbine Specifications and Layout

The turbine dimensions have been specified in the application as follows:

- Maximum Tip height of 180m from ground
- Hub height of between 99m to 102.5m
- Rotor Diameter ranging between 155m to 162m
- Potential power output range of 6.6MW and 7.2MW per turbine
- Total potential output of between 85.8MW to 93.6 MW for the windfarm
- Conventional three-blade design
- Proposed turbine colour – light grey

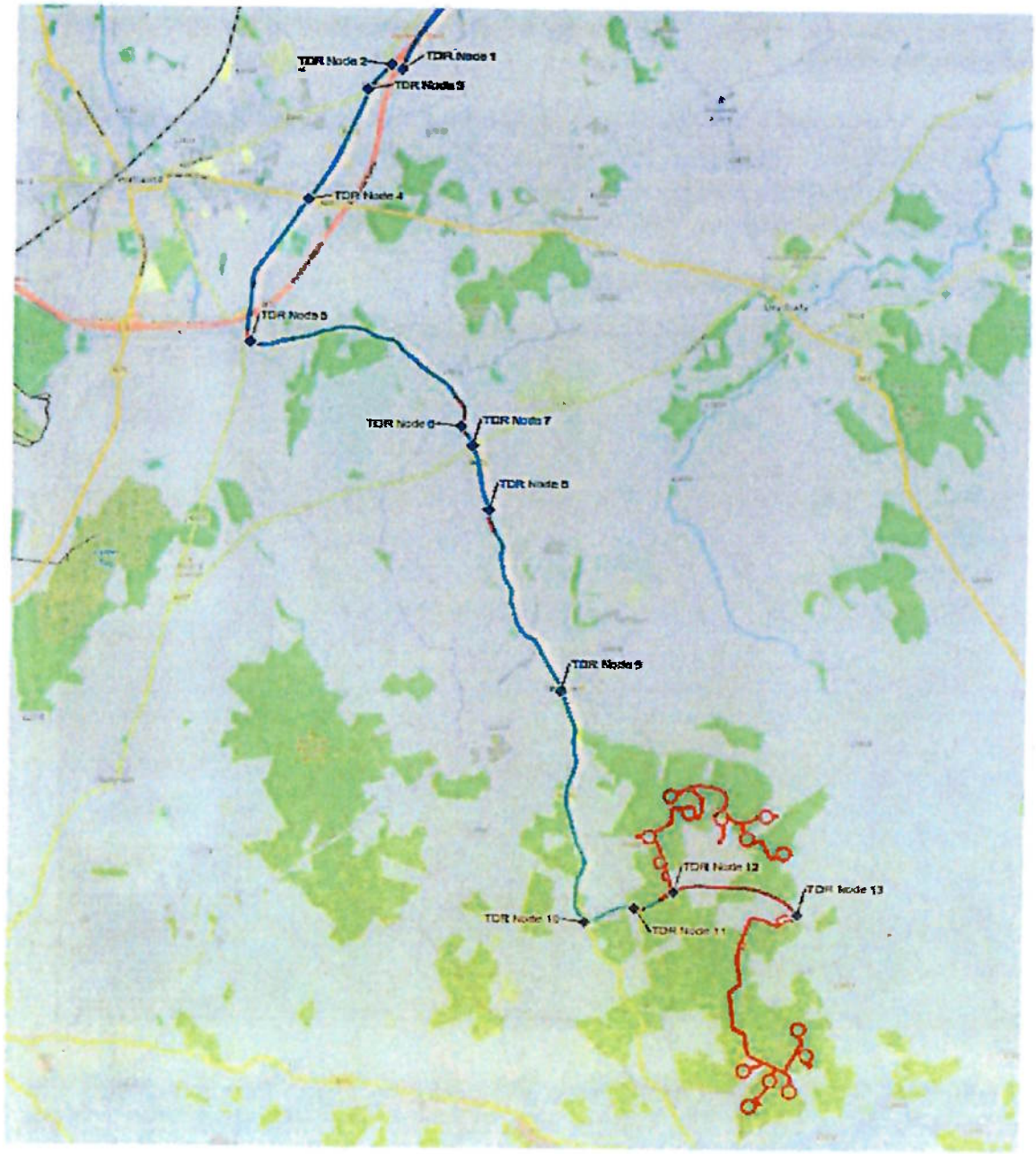


4.6 Internal Access Tracks

The Proposed Development will require c.15.5km of internal access tracks. Of this, 5km of old internal access tracks will be utilised and 10.55km of new site access tracks and drainage will need to be constructed. Further details of the access tracks and drainage are contained in Section 3.9.3 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

4.7 Turbine Delivery Route

Turbine delivery will be from Dublin port and join the M50 motorway via the Dublin Port Tunnel. The routes continues along the M50, exiting the N7 National Road / M7 motorway heading west before existing at Junction 16. The route exists the motorway and travel south on the R445 Regional Road towards Rathleague. Once the turbine route crosses the M7 the route continues in a southern and easterly direction on the Portlaoise Road / R426 Regional Road, through Timahoe. The route will continue along the R426 Regional Road, before heading east on Knocklead Road, before accessing either the southern or northern clusters via existing forestry tracks.



4.8 Secondary Project Elements

Off-site and secondary elements of the project which are included for assessment in the EIAR but are **not** included in the current planning application and will be subject to a separate licensing and/or consenting process, include:-

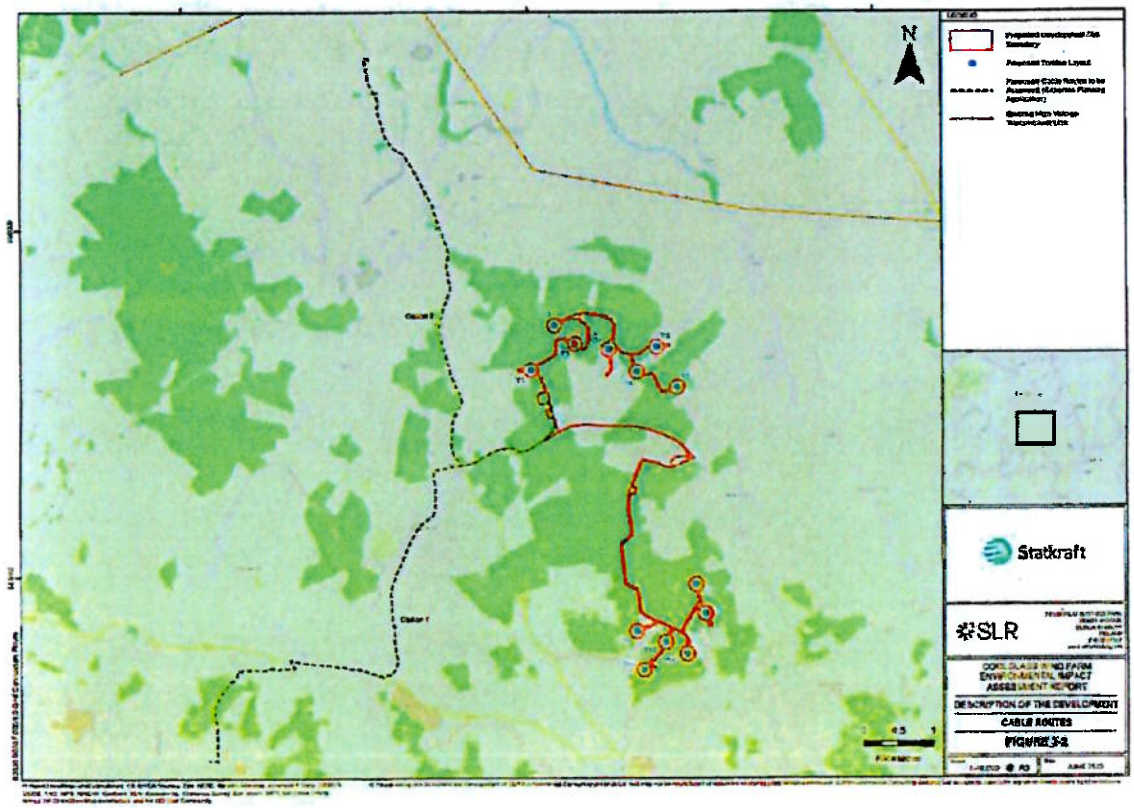
i) Cable Route
ii) Tree Felling

4.8.1 Cable Route

Two cable routes are assessed as part of the EIAR. The preferred underground cable route connecting the proposed wind farm to the national grid will be part of a separate planning application. The two cable routes assessed in the EIAR traverse the following townlands:

- Option 1 comprises a cable route between the proposed onsite substation and the Pinewoods substation. This route is 9.9km in length
- Option 2 comprises a cable route between the proposed onsite substation and Coolnabacky substation. This route is 10.1km in length.

The cable route options are shown below:



After consultation with Eirgrid takes place, the preferred option from a technical and environmental level will be the subject of a separate planning application. Once permitted, the works to facilitate its construction are expected to be conducted over a 12-month period.

4.8.2 Tree Felling

Much of the site comprises commercial coniferous forest. 11no. turbines are located within forestry, and consequently tree felling will be required as part of the project. Felling of c 54.36 (52.78 hectares permanent, 1.58 temporary) of largely coniferous forestry is proposed.

Tree felling will be subject to a felling licence application to the Forest Service prior to construction in accordance with the Forest Services policy on granting felling licences for wind farm developments.

4.9 Overall Output

Assuming the installed capacity of 85.8 to 93.6MW, the applicant states that the Proposed Development would be sufficient to supply 59,000 to 64,000 Irish households with electricity per year, based on the average Irish households using 4.2 MWh of electricity.

5.0 Pertinent Policy

5.1 International and European Energy Policy

EU Commission European Green Deal 2019

The European Green Deal sets out increased levels of ambition for the EU as a whole and aims to deliver net-zero greenhouse gas emissions at EU level by 2050 and to increase the EU-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction target from 40% to up to 55% by 2030. Delivering the Green Deal will require a transformation of the EU and national economies with sectors such as transport, the built environment, agriculture, industry, and energy all having to become more environmentally sustainable if the goal of decoupling economic growth from resource use is to be achieved. The EU Climate and Energy Package 2020 resulted in a set of binding legislation which aims to ensure the EU meets its ambitious climate and energy targets for 2020.

Climate and Energy Framework (2030)

This framework plan was agreed by EU leaders in July 2018. In September 2020, the European Commission proposed an increase in the 2030 targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions from 40% to at least 55% compared to 1990 levels. These targets seek a greater contribution from renewable energy under key policy pillars covering renewable energy, energy efficiency and emissions trading.

EU Directive 2009/28/EC

The Renewable Energy Directive created an overarching EU policy for the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources. It required an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of 20% across the EU, a 20% increase in energy efficiency and that 20% of the EU's energy consumption to be from renewable sources. It also required each member state to adopt individual targets and setting out how these targets would be efficiently achieved.

In December 2018, the revised Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU was adopted, to assist the EU in meeting its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement. The revised directive establishes a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32% of energy consumption to be from renewable sources. In addition, each member state is required to draft 10-year National Energy &

Climate Plans (NECPs) for 2021-2030, outlining how they will meet the new 2030 targets for renewable energy and for energy efficiency.

EU Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation (EU) 2018/1999EU

This regulation sets the overall framework for the achievement of the EU climate and energy 2030 targets and requires Member States to develop a National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP). The aim of the NECPs is to provide an integrated policy framework for the period up to 2030 to ensure regulatory certainty and a coordinated approach among Member States.

5.2 National Energy Policy and Guidance Documents

White Paper – Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future for Ireland 2015-2030

The White Paper outlines a framework to guide Government policy and the actions in the energy sector up to 2030. It is based on the following three 'pillars' Sustainability, Security of Supply and Competitiveness. It reaffirms the targets for 2020 as stated previously (i.e. 16% overall renewable energy target and 40% target for electricity from renewable sources by 2020). It also incorporates the new targets agreed in Paris (2015) of 80-95% GHG reduction by 2050 and zero emissions by 2100.

The White Paper places strong emphasis on embracing new technologies and in radically changing behaviour to achieve a consensus approach by all stakeholders to the transition to a low carbon economy. There is an identified need to focus on citizens and communities as active participants and agents of change in order to achieve the ambitious energy transition goals.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

This Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act was enacted in December 2015 and provides a statutory basis for the national objective of a transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. It provides for the development of a National Mitigation Plan to specify the Greenhouse House Gas mitigation policy for each Government department to transition to low carbon. It also makes provision for a 'National Adaptation Framework', which would be a strategic policy framework across all departments, as well as 'Sectoral Adaptation plans', which would ensure the adoption of measures taken by Departments.

National Mitigation Plan

The National Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2017 and represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the deep decarbonisation in line with Government policy objectives by mid-century. It includes a range of mitigation measures and actions to decarbonise the electricity generation sector and to prepare for the EU renewable energy targets that Ireland will take on for 2030.

National Adaptation Framework

The National Adaptation Framework (2018) sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts. As part of this framework, key Government departments are required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to a priority area that they are responsible for. In addition, local authorities are required to prepare their own local adaptation strategies which are to be reviewed at least once every five years.

Climate Action Plan - 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019. On 21 December 2022, the plan was officially launched. Its primary objective is to implement the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings while providing a clear roadmap for decisive action. The plan aims to cut our emissions in half by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions no later than 2050, as outlined in the Programme for Government (2022).

The following actions relevant to onshore wind farm development

- EL/23/3 Publish a roadmap for the development and implementation of Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies
- EL/23/4 Prepare new draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines for onshore renewables
- EL/23/5 Complete analysis to update Shaping Our Electricity Future to accommodate 80% renewables and align with carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings for electricity
- EL/23/6 Ensure electricity generation grid connection policies and regular rounds of connection offers which facilitate timely connecting of renewables, provides a locational signal and supports flexible technologies
- EL/23/10 Deliver onshore and offshore RESS auctions as per the annual RESS auction calendar.

The National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF) was published in 2018 and sets out high level, strategic planning and development for the Country until 2040, to ensure economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth.

The NPF sets out 10 National Strategic Outcomes to guide the future development of Ireland over the next 20 years. The following NPF outcomes and policies are considered to be relevant to the proposed development:

- National Strategic Outcome 8 – Transition to Sustainable Energy states that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, more renewable focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy.
- National Policy Objective 23 - '*Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism*'.

Chapter 9 of the NPF: Realising Our Sustainable Future recognises the need to accelerate action on climate change for a low carbon energy future. In this regard the following NPO's are of relevance:

- National Policy Objective 54 seeks to "reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions."
- National Policy Objective 55 - *'Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050'*

Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006

These guidelines provide advice to the Board and to planning authorities on wind energy development through the Development Plan process and in determining applications through the development management process. They are intended to provide for consistency in the approach to wind energy development in terms of the identification of suitable locations for such development and in the determination of planning applications. It is stated that the assessment of such projects should be planled with clear guidance on where wind energy development should locate and what factors will be taken into account.

The matters to be considered in a planning application are set out in Chapter 4 of that document. These include potential impacts on:

- The built and natural heritage;
- Ground conditions and drainage;
- Visual and landscape impacts;
- Local environmental impacts, including noise, shadow flicker, electromagnetic interference);
- Adequacy of local access road network to facilitate the construction of the project and the transportation of large machinery and turbine parts to the site;
- Cumulative effects due to other projects;
- Information on the location of quarries to be used or borrow pits;
- Disposal or elimination of waste; and
- Decommissioing considerations.

It is stated that best practice would suggest that an integrated planning application that include grid connection information should ideally be submitted and that developers should be encouraged to engage in public consultation with the local community.

Chapter 5 includes reference to the potential environmental impacts arising from wind energy developments. Guidance is given on matters such as natural heritage, ground conditions / geology, archaeology, architectural heritage, noise, safety aspects, proximity to roads, railways and power lines, aircraft safety, shadow flicker, windtake, decommissioning and reinstatement.

A setback distance is not established, however, in terms of shadow flicker, the recommended standard is a maximum of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day for dwellings and offices within 500m. It is further stated that at distances of greater than 10 rotor diameters, the potential for shadow flicker is very low.

In respect of noise, whilst no specific figures are included in the 2006 guidelines, the recommended standard is a lower fixed limit of 45dBA or a maximum increase of 5dBA above background noise and nearby noise sensitive locations, apart from very quiet

areas where the daytime level is limited to 35-40dB(A). A night time limit of 43 dB(A) is recommended.

Chapter 6 provides guidance on siting and design of wind energy development in the landscape. This includes advice on siting, spatial extent and scale, cumulative effect, spacing of turbines, layout of turbines and height of turbines. Advice is also given regarding landscape character types as a basis for application of the guidance on siting and design.

Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines - 2019

The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government published Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines in December 2019 following a focused review to establish clearer guidance to facilitate the achievement of wider renewable energy targets, while also considering community, spatial planning, energy policy, environmental, technological and industry issues that all need to be balanced.
The proposed key revisions include the following;

- **New noise standards:** The proposed new standards have been brought up to date in line with the 2018 World Health Organization (WHO) Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, including a maximum noise level of 43 dB(A). A robust new noise monitoring framework is also proposed.
- **Setback distances:** This is required for the purposes of visual amenity and comprise a distance of **four times the tip height** between a wind turbine and nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a minimum mandatory setback distance of 500 metres. This setback distance must also comply with the proposed noise limits.
- **Shadow flicker:** Automatic control mechanisms for shadow flicker will be required during the operational phase of a wind energy development.
- **Community engagement:** Developers will be required to undertake mandatory and active consultation with the public and the local community at an early stage in project development. There is also a requirement for the preparation of a 'Community Report' to be submitted as part of the planning application.
- **Community dividend:** Wind energy developers must provide an opportunity for the local community to receive social or economic benefit from the project (e.g., community investment, ownership etc.)
- **Grid connections:** Updated advice has been included concerning the requirements of EIA as they relate to wind energy development and associated grid connections, as informed by relevant case law.

National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025

The National Landscape Strategy was published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in June 2015. The main objectives include the development of a National Landscape Character Assessment, which would provide a framework for the protection and management of change within the landscape in terms of its cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The aim is to seek to achieve a balance between the social, cultural and economic needs and the environment and the landscape. It is stated that a National Landscape Character Assessment would ensure consistency between and within public authority functions and areas, would inform LCA's at a local level and would guide the development of landscape policy.

5.3 Regional Policy and Guidance Documents

Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly

County Laois forms part of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) which has 3 sub regions or Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), namely the Midland, Eastern and Dublin SPAs. Laois is located in the Midlands SPA along with Offaly, Westmeath and Longford. The EMRA adopted the RSES on May 3rd, 2019 which became effective on June 28th, 2019.

The EMRA defines the RSES as a 'strategic *plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region'.*

Aligning with the National Policy Objectives of the NPF, the RSES sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which set the framework for City and County Development Plans to build climate resilience into their policies and objectives and to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. The Strategy identifies the following RSOs in relation to climate action:

- RSO 6. Integrated Transport and Land Use
- RSO 7. Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources
- RSO 8. Build Climate Resilience
- RSO 9 Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy: Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables focused energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.

- RSO 10. Enhanced Green Infrastructure
- RSO 11. Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

The following relevant Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) are considered to be

RPO 6.7

Support local authorities to develop sustainable and economically efficient rural economies through initiatives to enhance sectors such as agricultural and food, forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bioeconomy, tourism, and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage.

RPO 7.36

Planning policy at local authority level shall reflect and adhere to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for

Community Engagement and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.

5.4 Local Policy Context

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Laois CDP) was adopted on 25th January 2022 and came into effect 8th March 2022. A Ministerial Direction associated with this plan was submitted on the 28th September 2022.

The relevant Sections, Policies and Objectives of the Laois CDP, which have significance to the proposed development are outlined below and have been informed as appropriate by the Wind Energy Strategy as outlined in Appendix V of the Laois CDP 2021-2027, and referenced later in this report.

Climate Action and Energy

Chapter 3 (Climate Action and Energy) includes the aim "To reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions."

The following are the pertinent policies and objectives of the Council to:

- CMRE 1 - Prepare a Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) for County Laois including to identify the target which County Laois can contribute in delivering its share of overall Government targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation over the plan period, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource (in megawatts), and commencement of the variation to the County Development Plan within 1 year of adoption of the plan. Once adopted this will be by way of a variation to the Laois County Development Plan

- CM RE 2 – Promote and encourage the development of energy from renewable sources such as hydro, bio-energy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers.

- CM RE 5 – Promote and facilitate wind energy development in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Wind Energy Development (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) and any update thereof and the Appendix 5 Wind Energy Strategy of this Plan, the Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change, and subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

- CM RE 6 - Ensure a setback distance for Wind turbines from schools, dwellings, community centres and all public roads in all areas open for consideration for wind farm development as per the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Wind Energy Development (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government).

- CM RE 7 – Promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the 'preferred areas' as outlined on Map 3.2 to prohibit such infrastructure in areas as 'Areas not open for consideration' and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas 'open for consideration' and as per the Laois Wind Energy Strategy 2021-2027.

Section 3.5.5 (Wind Energy) states that there are a number of issues which must be taken into consideration when dealing with applications for wind energy development. These include visual impact, landscape protection, impacts on residential amenity, impact on wildlife and habitats, connections to the national grid and impact of construction and ancillary infrastructure including access roads and grid connections. The Council will have regard to the Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DHPLG, 2019) in relation to the siting and development of wind turbines and the information required as part of a planning application.

Appendix 5 (Wind Energy Strategy) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes the methodology used to inform the wind energy strategy for County Laois.

The methodology has been primarily informed by a number of considerations including the amount of existing and approved capacity in the county to date, the potential of other renewable energy options including solar, available wind data and transmission network, settlement patterns and population densities of the county as well as the relevant environmental, tourism promotion and landscape policies in the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Section 4 of Appendix 5 includes reference to:

- Wind Resource Mapping
- Transmission Network
- Settlement Patterns and Population Densities
- Designated Areas
- Landscape Character Types in County Laois
- Views and Prospects Worthy of Preservation
- Archaeology
- Recreation, Tourism and Amenity
- Landslide Susceptibility
- Wind Energy Strategies in Adjoining Counties

Appendix 5 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes the following Wind Energy policies which are considered to be relevant:

- WES 1: Development of Renewable Energy Generation - It is the policy of the Council to support, in principle and in appropriate scales and locations, the development of wind energy resources in County Laois. The future sustainable development of the County is dependent on a secure supply of energy. There is a need to promote the development of renewable energy to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and to comply with national and European polices with regards to renewable energy resources and to address the challenge of climate change. It will be an objective of the Council to ensure the security of energy supply by accommodating the development of wind energy resources in appropriate areas and at appropriate scales in the county.

- WES 2: Development of Low Carbon Economy - Laois County Council will seek to promote itself as moving towards becoming a low carbon County by 2018 as a means of attracting inward investment to the County and the wider Midlands region.
- WES4: Community Involvement and Gain - Laois County Council will seek to promote community involvement and require community benefit where possible in proposed windfarm developments.

Specific Area Policies

Three area classifications [there are no Strategic Areas] have been recommended for windfarm development in County Laois and specific policies pertaining to each are presented below:

- WES 5: Preferred Areas - These areas are considered suitable for windfarm development because of sufficient wind speeds, access to grid network, and established patterns of enquiries.

  Projects within these areas must demonstrate conformity with existing and approved wind farms to avoid visual clutter, be developed in line with the Planning Guidelines in terms of siting, layout and environmental studies. Proximity to a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area will require a Habitats Directive Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitat Regulations.

- WES 6: Areas Open for Consideration - Wind energy applications in these areas will be evaluated on a case by case basis subject to viable wind speeds, environmental resources and constraints and cumulative impacts.

- WES 7: Areas Not Open for Consideration - These areas are not considered suitable for wind farm development due to their overall sensitivity arising from landscape, ecological, recreational and/or cultural and built heritage resources as well as their limited wind regime.

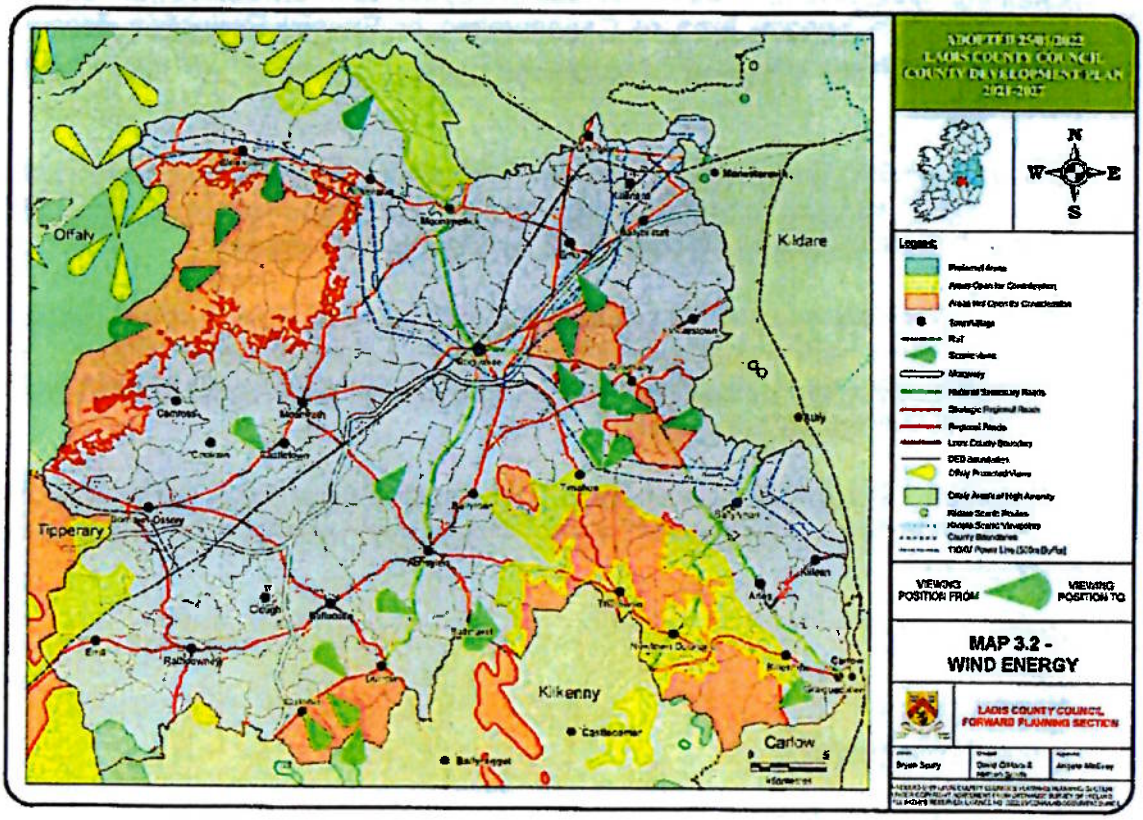
Section 6 of Appendix V of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes the Council's development management standards for Wind Development. These are as listed as follows:

- Buffer Zones
- Boundary
- Shadow Flicker
- Cumulative Impacts
- Archaeology
- Bird Migratory Routes
- Fencing
- Noise
- Environmental Monitoring
- Roads
- Aquifers
- Ancillary Structures and Equipment
- Grid Connection

- Electromagnetic Interference
- Aeronautical Safety
- Financial Contributions
- Safety Aspects
- Single Turbine Developments
- Decommissioning of associated infrastructure at end of life.

Map 3.2 (Wind Energy) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes reference to the following:

- Preferred Areas - Preferred Areas are deemed suitable for wind energy development unless specific local planning circumstances within the context of the development plan support a decision to refuse;
- Areas Open for Consideration - Applications in these areas will be treated on their merits with the onus on the applicant to demonstrate why the development should be granted permission; and
- Areas Not Open for Consideration - These are areas identified as particularly unsuitable for windfarm development. This category is used for areas which due to their scenic, ecological or tourism values are unable to accommodate development of this type.



Landscape

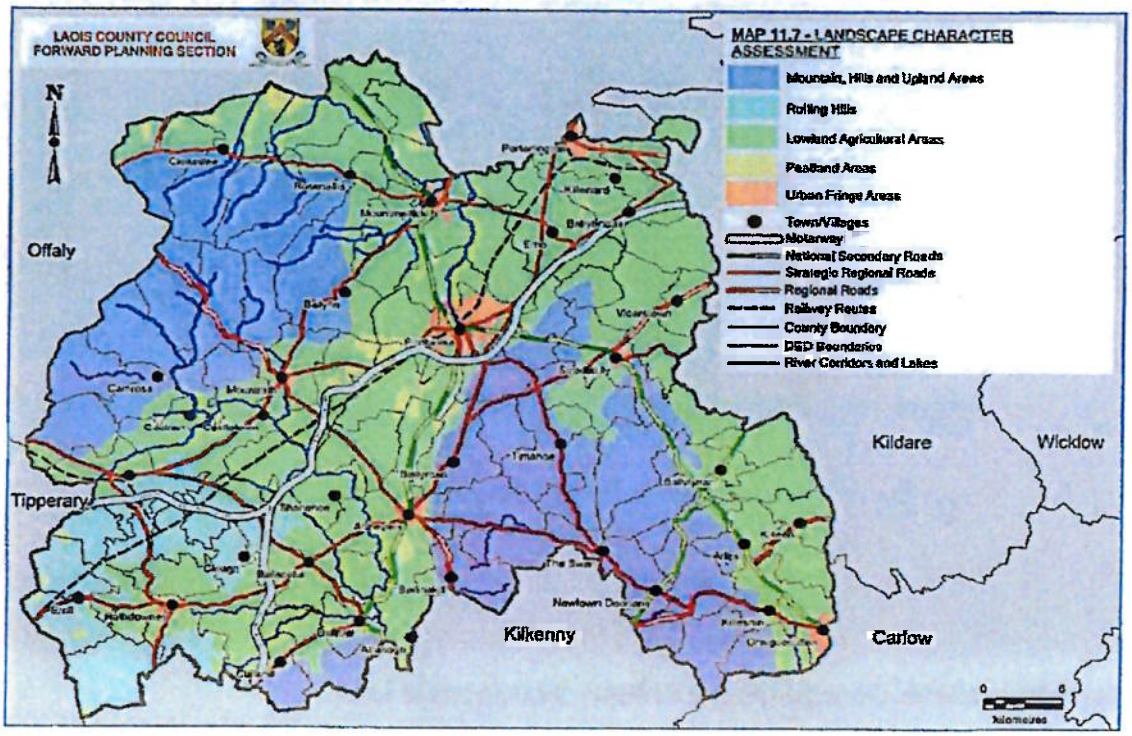
Section 11.10 of the Laois CDP addresses matters associated with landscape in the County.

Laois County Council has prepared a Landscape Character Assessment to identify specific areas that are characterised by sensitive landscapes. (See Figure 11.6) Sensitive areas include upland areas, visually open and expansive areas and areas in the vicinity of natural heritage or built heritage assets or scenic views.

The Assessment aims to will help developers select less sensitive sites for development. Landscape Character Types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities throughout any defined area. Nonetheless, where they do occur, they commonly share similar combinations of geology, topography, land cover and historical land use. For example, blanket bog uplands are distinct landscape character types and are recognisable as such whether they occur in County Laois or other counties.

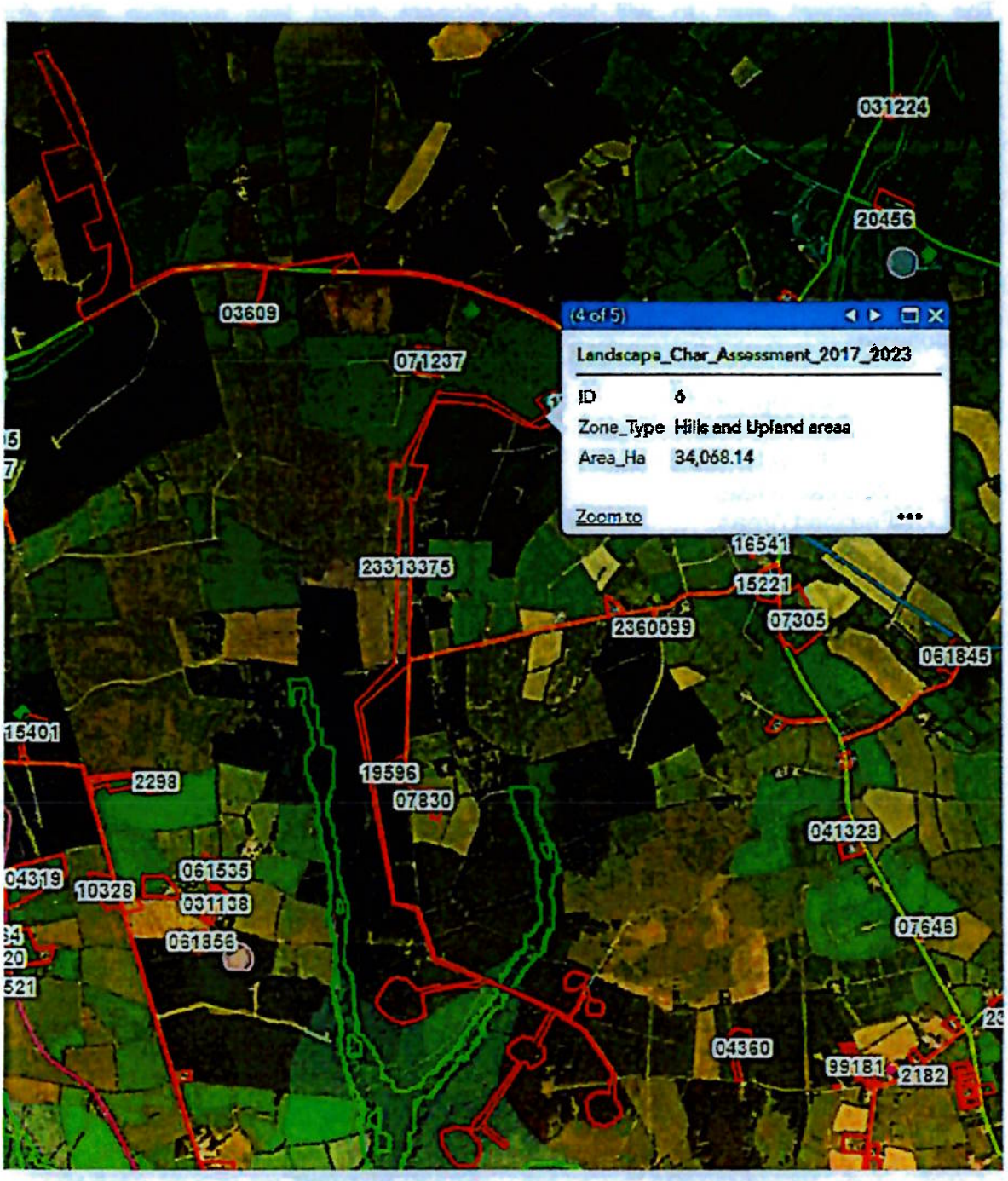
The Landscape Character Areas for County Laois are as follows and are identified in Map 11.7. Table 11.6 also classifies the sensitivity of each area when assessing development.

- Hills and Upland
- Lowland Agricultural Areas
- River Corridors and Lakes
- Mountain Areas
- Peatland Areas
- Urban Fringes
- Rolling Hills



Map 11.7: Landscape Character Assessment (Source Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027)

The application site is within the Hills and Uplands Area (shaded purple in Map 11.7), which has the medium sensitivity rating as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Appendix VI).



Extract from Laois County Council IPlan System on LCA

The following is an extract of Table 11.6 (Landscape Sensitivity) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Sensitivity	Landscape Character Area andSpecial Features	Description
Medium Sensitivity	Rolling Hills and Hills and Upland Areas	Areas with the capacity to accommodate a range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regards to localised sensitivity factors

Landscape Sensitivity (Source Table 11.6 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027)

The pertinent landscape policies with respect to the proposed development of the Council are as follows:

Policy Objectives for Landscape Character Areas	
LCA 1	Ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity, as indicated in Table 11.6 of the Plan, is an important factor in determining development uses In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design, type and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.
LCA 2	Protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape and conserve valuable habitat including any European and National Designations.

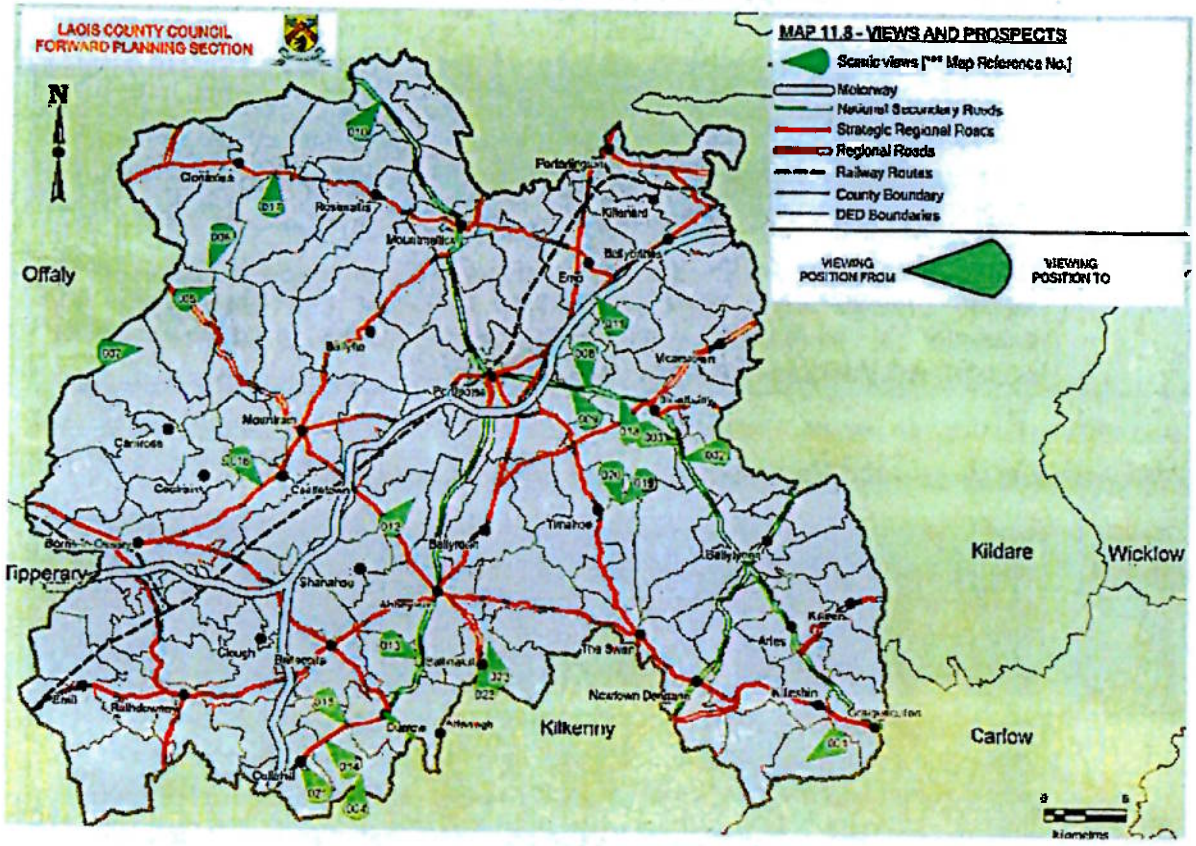
Policy Objectives for Hills and Uplands Areas and Mountain Areas	
LCA 5	Ensure that development will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere with or detract from scenic upland vistas, when viewed from areas nearby, scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.
LCA 6	Ensure that developments on steep slopes (i.e. >10%) will not be conspicuous orhave a disproportionate visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from relevant scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.
LCA 7	Facilitate, where appropriate, developments that have a functional and locational requirement to be situated on steep or elevated sites (e.g. reservoirs, telecommunication masts or wind energy structures) where residual adverse visual impacts are minimised or mitigated.
LCA 8	Maintain the visual integrity of areas which have retained a largely undisturbed upland character and Respect the remote character and existing low-density development in these areas.
LCA 9	Have regard to the potential for screening vegetation when evaluating proposals fordevelopment within the uplands.

Policy Objectives for Hills and Uplands Areas and Mountain Areas	
LCA 10	Actively propose the designation of the Slieve Blooms as a Special Amenity Areaand seek an Order to that effect.
LCA 11	Protect the positive contribution that views across adjacent lowland areas and landmarks within the landscape make to the overall landscape character.

Views and Prospects

Scenic routes and protected views consist of important and valued views and prospects within the county. Table 11.7 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, lists the specific scenic views of the landscape, many of which are located along scenic routes and include built and archaeological features. Map 11.8 also indicates such scenic views within the county, which is below.

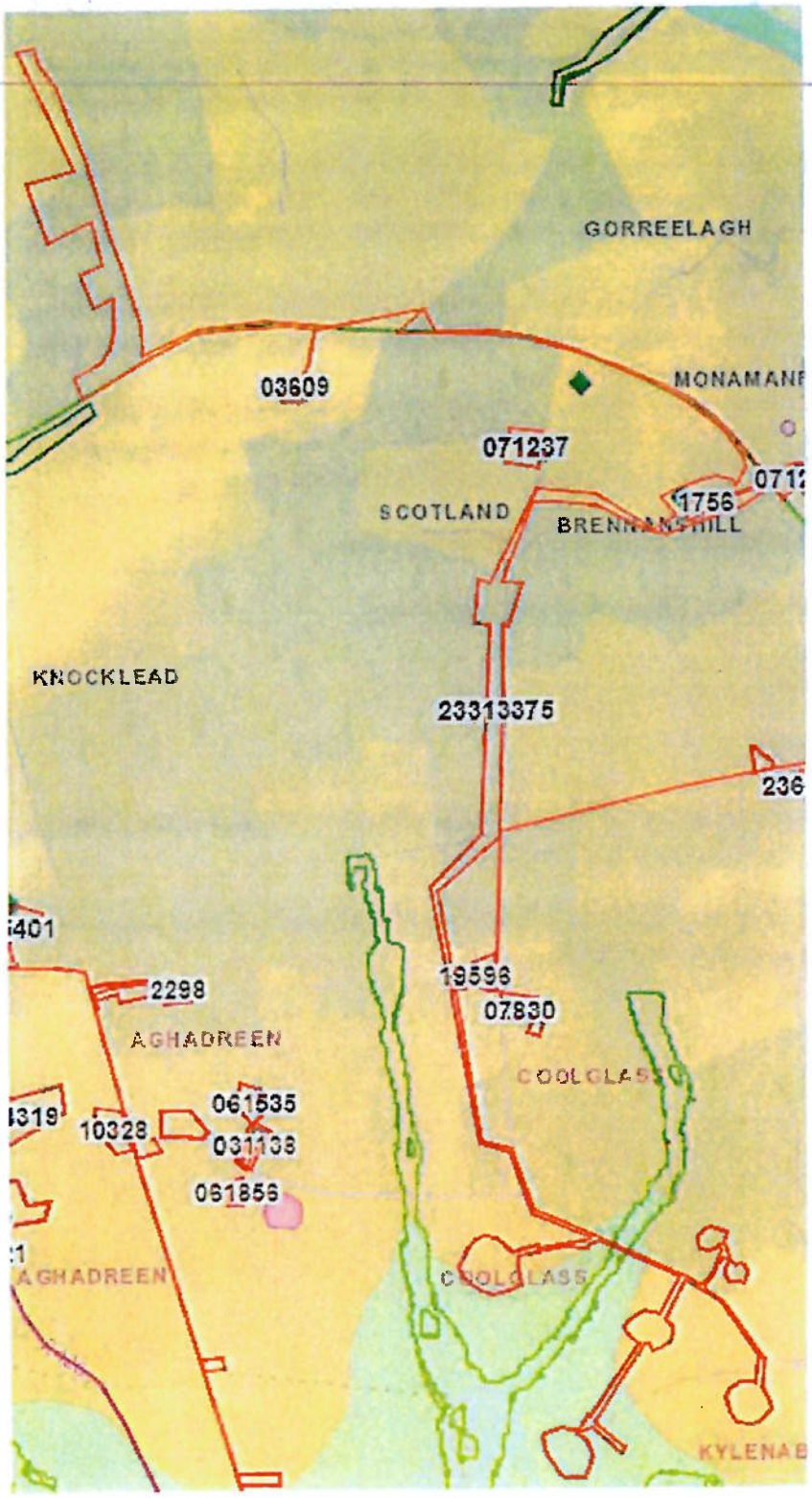
The Council recognises the need to protect the character of the county by protecting views and scenic routes.



6.0 Relevant Planning History and Enforcement Matters

6.1 Planning History

There are no specific applications for the site. There are some agricultural applications and one-off dwellings which bound the site. These are outlined as follows:



Planning Application Reference	Applicant, Description of Proposed Development and Decision
19/596	Patrick Meenehan granted permission to retain a log cabin as constructed and install a new wastewater treatment system and percolation area and associated site works
1756	John Stone granted permission to retain quarry as excavated. Full PLANNING PERMISSION to extend same quarry and associated site work on my lands
08/353	John Stone granted permission to construct an extension to existing animal housing to incorporate a slatted house and slurry storage
07/1355	Dermot Cooney granted permission to erect 2 new concrete aprons to existing silage pits, new extension to existing concrete yard and new extension to existing livestock holding pen
04/767	John and Eileen Carroll granted permission to erect dormer dwelling, septic tank, percolation area, water well and entrance to public road
01/733	Andrew and Kathleen Daly granted permission to demolish existing sub-standard house and to erect new bungalow and bored well and connect to existing septic tank

6.2 Enforcement Information Relating to the Subject Site

There are no enforcement matters relating to the subject site.

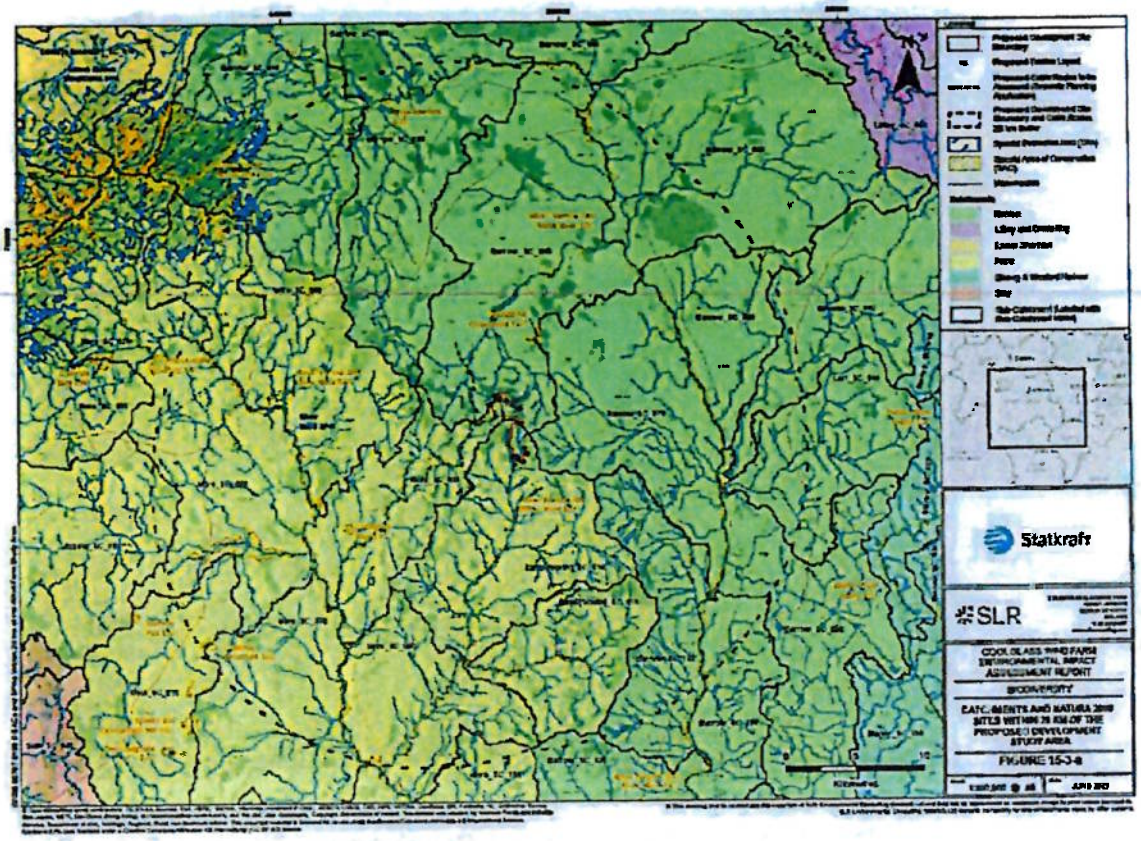
7.0 Designations

7.1 European Designations

The site does not lie within any SAC or SPA. Neither the main wind farm or Cable route option B are within or adjacent to any SAC or SPA.

However, Cable route option A runs adjacent to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC near Chapel Cross Roads along the R430 road.

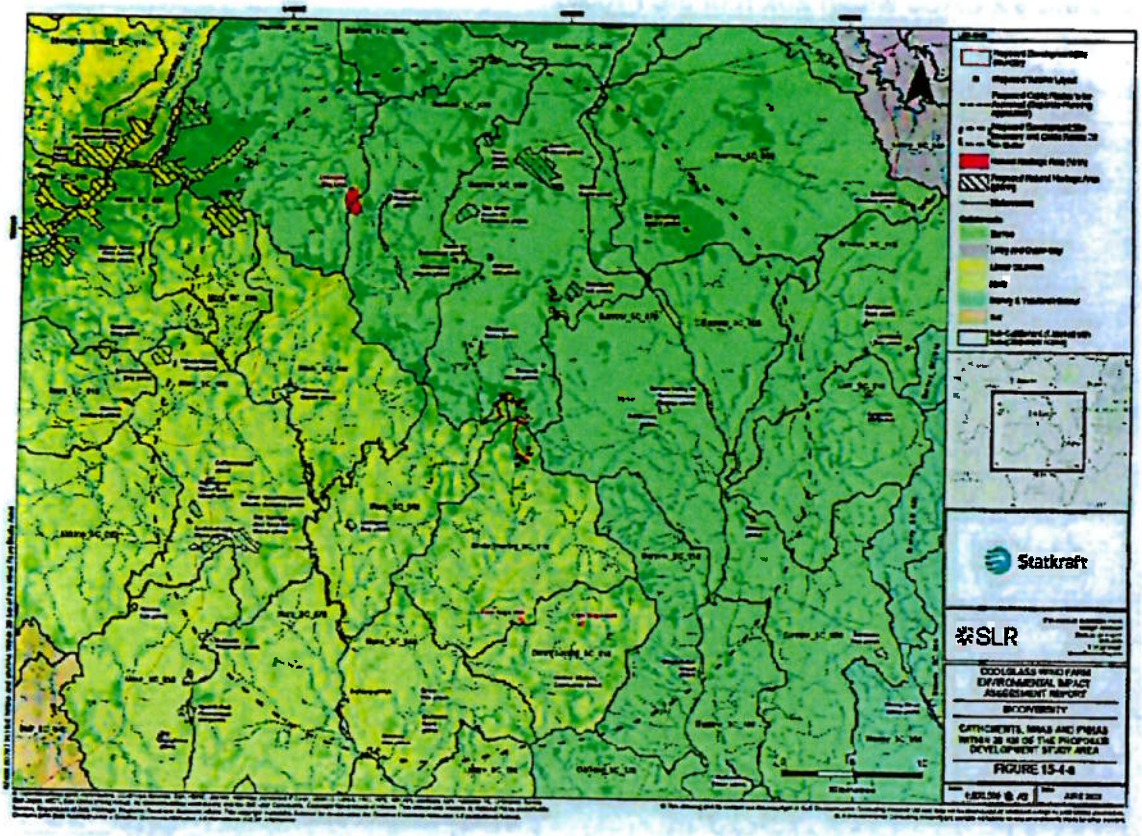
There are six SACs within 20km of the Project.



SACs and SPAs within 20km of the Proposed Development Site and Cable Route Options (Extract Figure 15-3 of the EIAR)

7.2 National Designations

There are two NHAs and 31 pNHAs within 20km of the Proposed Development and Cable Route Options.



NHAs and pNHAs within 20 km of the Proposed Development Site and Cable Route Options (Extract Figure 15-4 of the EIAR)

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)has been prepared by the applicant and included with this application. These designated sites are discussed in detail in both the EIAR and the NIS submitted with the planning application.

The NIS concludes that with the identified mitigation measures in place, it can be concluded, beyond all reasonable scientific doubt that the Project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects **will not** undermine the conservation objectives or any European Sites.

8.0 Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas

There are no known cultural heritage assets of National Monuments located within the study area. There are 10 known prehistoric cultural heritage sites within the 1km buffer zone. There are five undated cultural heritage assets within the 1km buffer zone.

Chapter 11 of the EIAR states that the only asset that may be subject to direct impact as a result of the cable route would be the cultural heritage town of Timahoe. This is detailed further later in this report. However, Section 11.4.2 of the EIAR states that *there are no anticipated Operational Effects on any cultural heritage assets as a result of the cable route. Therefore, no harm or benefits are envisioned.*

9.0 Public Water Scheme Areas and any history of flooding relevant to the site

9.1 Public Water Scheme Areas

The Public Supply Source Protection Areas (SPA) comprises area around groundwater abstraction points that are managed by Irish Water to supply public water supply across Ireland.

The proposed turbine T2 is located within the Outer Protection area of Kyle & Orchard Spring Water Supply Scheme.

The Swan Water Supply Scheme is located to the south of the Southern Cluster of the Proposed Development. The planning boundary of the Proposed Development overlays the Swan Water Supply Scheme. However, no construction works are proposed within this area. The closest turbine to the Swan Water Supply Scheme is T12, located 75m away.

Section 9.6.8.4 of the EIAR states that according to the available flood mapping all the proposed turbines, hardstanding areas and on site substation for the Proposed Development are situated within "Flood Zone C" (less than 0.1%).

10.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)

The following section gives an overview of the EIAR submitted as part of this planning application.

The EIAR is considered to be set out in a clear format. The table below provides a brief summary of the environmental impacts of the proposal as outlined in the chapters contained in the EIAR.

1. Introduction

This chapter is clearly set out and indexed. The introduction sets out and refers to the need for the proposed development and the proposed economic benefits envisaged, from the proposal are outlined. The structure of the EIAR is set out and the persons responsible for the preparation of the EIAR are identified.

2. Scoping and Key Issues

This chapter describes the consultation process and EIAR scoping that was undertaken to identify key effects from the Proposed Development to be included in the EIAR. This includes reference to meetings with Laois County Council, An Bord Pleanala and Community Consultation.

3. Description of Proposed Development

The chapter includes a breakdown of the proposed a description of the proposed development. The exact wording is different to that referred to in the Site Notices, for example there is reference to cable routes and recreational amenity trail. However, it states that the whilst the cable routes and recreational amenity trail are assessed in the EIAR, they will be subject to future planning applications.

4. Planning Policy

The Chapter describes the European, national, regional and local policy support for a transition to renewable energy.

5. *Population and Human Health*

The chapter assesses the proposed development on population, human health and material assets, which includes the minimum and maximum hub height and rotor diameter parameters being proposed and all design permutations within that range. It includes reference to potential effects during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. The chapter also includes reference to mitigation measures, residual effects.

Table 5-12 includes reference to the potential cumulative impact of the proposed development and existing or permitted developments. . This includes reference to the following wind farm developments:

- Bilboa Wind Farm Completed
- Cullenagh Wind Farm – Not commenced
- Pinewood Wind Farm – Not commenced

Section 5.6.3.1 refers that all renewable energy projects applying for Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) will require a Community Benefit Fund prior to commercial operations of the Proposed Development. The contribution for RESS 3 (2002), requires a contribution of €2/MWh for all projects. As part of RESS 3, the Community Benefit Fund will provide a minimum payment of €1,000 to all dwellings located within a distance of 1 kilometre radius from RESS 3 projects and a minimum of 40% of the funds shall be paid to not-for-profit community enterprises, whose primary source or aim is the promotion of initiatives towards the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

With respect to Community Gain, it is stated that a Community Benefit fund for the local area, assuming the export capacity will be approximately €470,000 per year for the local area for the duration of the scheme.

Chapter 4 concludes that once mitigation measures set out throughout the EIAR are implemented, no significant negative effects on population, human health and material assets will occur as a result of the development of the Proposed Development.

6. *Air Quality and Climate*

This chapter identifies, describes and assess the potential significant direct, indirect and cumulative effects on air quality and climate arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

The chapter concludes that the proposed development will have an overall positive impact in terms of carbon reduction and climate change. No significant impacts on climate are predicted during the construction. In terms of the operational phase, it concludes the operation of the proposed development will have a positive effect on climate due to the displacement of fossil fuels. There will be no residual impacts on climate. In terms of cumulative impact, the nature of the proposed development and other energy development within 20 kilometres are such that, once operational, they will have a cumulative long term, significant, positive effect on the air quality and climate.

7. Landscape and Visual Impact

The chapter assesses the impacts on the landscape and visual amenity of the receiving environment. It states that 27 viewshed reference points (VP) were selected.

The highest magnitude of impact is experienced from local receptors located between the two clusters, however, these do not exceed a visual impact significance of Moderate.

The Chapter also concludes that the contribution to the cumulative impacts by the Proposed Development is deemed to be **Medium-low**.

8. Land, Soils and Geology

The chapter assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development on Land, Soils and Geology.

It concludes that with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the potential effects of fuel spill on soils and bedrock will reduce to imperceptible.

9. Water

The chapter assesses the effects of the proposed development on the water environment. The proposed development is not located within any significant flood zones.

- The north of the Proposed Development is within the Barrow catchment (ID 14) and the surface water bodies are comprised of the tributaries of Stradbally River and Crooked River. The Crooked River joins the Stradbally River approximately 6.7 km north of the site.

- The southern extent of the Proposed Development is part of the Nore catchment (ID 15) with tributaries of the river Owveg to the west of the Proposed Development and River Clough to the south of the site traversing this area.
- The site drains into the tributaries of the River Barrow and River Nore.
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC are approximately 8.1km downstream of the northern cluster and approximately 3.3km downstream of the southern cluster
- Under WFD, all watercourses receiving surface runoff from the site are classified as being of good status based on its physio-chemical and biological quality, apart from Clogh_010 which is classified as 'Moderate' and 'At Risk'
- The proposed turbine T2 is located within the SO area of Kyle & Orchard Spring Water Supply Scheme. A groundwater monitoring well has been installed nearby to monitoring groundwater quality Swan Water Supply Scheme is approximately 110m south of the proposed turbine T12.

With mitigation measures in place at the Site, the significance of potential impacts during the construction and operational stage will be reduced to "slight" or lower to the water environment receptors.

10. Noise and Vibration

The chapter considers noise and vibration associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

The construction noise assessment has determined that associated levels are expected to remain within acceptable limits and that their temporary effects are not

significant. Operational noise from the proposed turbines do not exceed the daytime or night time noise limits delivered in accordance with the 2006 Guidelines under all wind speeds and at all locations.

11. Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage

The chapter assesses the impacts on the known and potential cultural heritage resource within their environs.

There are no known cultural heritage assets or National Monuments located within the study areas. There are ten known prehistoric cultural heritage assets within 1km of the Proposed Development boundary.

There are currently no predicted direct construction impacts on known archaeological remains associated with the construction stage of the Proposed Development.

Chapter 11 states that the only asset that may be subject to direct impact as a result of the cable route would be the cultural heritage town of Timahoe. The assets referenced as warranting further discussion are as follows:

- Timahoe Ecclesiastical Complex, specifically:
  - Timahoe Round Tower (LA018-031005);
  - Timahoe Church (LA018-031001); and
  - Castle/Tower House (LA018-031006); as well as
- Fossy Church (LA019-016);
- Ringfort – Rath (LA024-015001)
- Castle – Motte and Bailey (LA024-015002); and
- Saint Mogue's Church, Timogue (12801929).

Section 11.4.2 of the EIAR states that *there are no anticipated Operational Effects on any cultural heritage assets as a result of the cable route. Therefore, no harm or benefits are envisioned.*

12. Traffic and Transport

This chapter examines the vehicle movements to facilitate the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development, including the movement of abnormal loads to facilitate turbine delivery.

Construction work will be limited to 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 16:00 at weekends, other than in exceptional circumstances, such as the delivery of the turbine components which will occur in the overnight hours where possible.

The chapter concludes that the Proposed Development would not lead to a significant adverse effect due to traffic impacts.

13. Telecommunications and Aviation

The chapter assess the likely potential impact of the proposed development on local telecommunication services and aviation. Stakeholders were consulted, with tables contained in Table 13-1 of the EIAR.

The nearest residential receptor is 722m from the nearest turbine, while the nearest signal tower is 450m from the nearest turbine.

No remedial measures are required given that no negative impacts have been identified.

14. Shadow Flicker

The chapter considers the potential impact on receptors from shadow flicker generated by the Proposed Development.

No receptors were identified within the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines 500m assessment area. A total of 169 receptors have been identified within the 1,550m and 1,620m shadow flicker study areas. This is broken down as 146 within 1,550m and a further residential receptors within 1,620 shadow flicker area.

The closest receptor is 722m from the nearest proposed wind turbine.

- Scenario 1 – Of the 143 receptors, 44 would not experience any shadow flicker effects. Receptor 70 would have shadow flicker effects of upto 134.3 hours per year.
- Scenario 2 – Of the 169 receptors, 61 would not experience any shadow flicker effects. Receptor 70, Crissard, Wolfhill would have shadow flicker effects of upto 139.4 hours per year.

A shadow flick assessment has been undertaken on 169 receptors within 10 rotor diameters of the proposed turbines. The shadow flicker exceeds 30 minutes at 20 receptors under Scenario 1 and 22 receptors under Scenario 2.

When considering the "Total Theoretical Hours Per Year", 50 receptors are predicted to exceed the WEDG 2006 threshold of more than 30 hours per year, under either Scenario modelled.

However, when accounting for a more "likely" scenario, where the average sunshine hours are taken into account, Chapter 14 states that five receptors are predicted to exceed more than 30 hours per year under Scenario 1, and six properties under Scenario 2.

The applicant is committed to implementing a zero shadow flicker approach in line with the 2019 Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines. This will be undertaken by shutting down turbines during times when wind and climatic conditions are such that shadow flicker could occur, using appropriate mitigation measures such as the turbines inbuilt shadow flicker control module. The module is programmed to shut down on specific dates at specific times, when the sun is bright enough, there is sufficient wind to rotate the blades and the wind direction is such that nuisance shadow flicker could occur.

The implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, namely a zero shadow flick approach, will ensure that shadow flicker at all buildings is eliminated resulting in no impacts to receptors.

15. Biodiversity

Chapter 15 assess the potential for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of Coolglass Wind Farm.

The Project does not lie within any SAC or SPA.

The NIS considered that with mitigation measures, the Project would not give rise to any appreciable effects on Natura 2000 sites.

Section 16.3 of the None Technical Summary states that *if mitigation measures are fully applied, there are not likely to be any residual significant effects on important ecological features, beyond those on kestrel and peregrine populations of very low significance, due to collision risk.*

16. Major Accidents and Disasters

This chapter describes the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment arising from the vulnerability to major accidents and natural disasters, potential adverse impacts on human health and the environment, the magnitude of potential impacts, the likelihood of potential impacts and considers the preparedness of the Proposed Development in case of accident, disaster or emergency.

The chapter concludes that the project carries no significant risk of causing major accidents or disasters, not it is vulnerable to potential disasters or accidents , including both natural and man-made incidents.

17. Site Selection and Alternatives

This chapter sets out the need for the development, and considers reasonable alternatives studied by the developer. This includes a consideration of the following factors:

- Available wind resource
- Land use context
- Electricity grid availability and capacity
- Residential amenity and community
- Environmental constraints (including natural and archaeological heritage)
- Landscape and visual capacity
- Accessibility
- Energy and land-use planning policies
- Other Factors

Following the selection of the site a number of layout and design iterations were considered.

The chapter concludes with a cross reference of the residual impact of the proposed project with the "do nothing" alternative.

11.0 Third Party Observations / Submission Submitted to An Bord Pleanala

On the date of submission of this report to the members of Laois County Council for consideration, the Planning Department has not been notified of any third-party submissions or referrals from prescribed bodies, that had been submitted to the Board. The Planning Authority note that the last day for public submissions to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála is before **5.30pm on 9th October 2023**.

The Planning Authority have to submit their own report to the board within 10 weeks before **5.30pm on 23rd October 2023**.

12.0 Reports of Relevant Local Authority Departments

Senior Executive Engineer – Municipal Area

- The applicant will be required to rectify all damage caused to the public road network resulting from the proposed works. In this regard a pre-development and post-development condition survey of the road network must be carried out by the applicant, in consultation with Laois County Council's Area Office.
- The applicant will need to apply for a road opening licence for all excavations in the public road/verge.
- The applicant will need to ensure that there is no surface water allowed to discharge onto the public roadway from the proposed development and ensure that surface water is allowed to drain freely from the public roadway into existing roadside verges/open drains adjacent to any proposed development works.
- The applicant will need to provide adequate sightlines at all proposed access points to the public road network in accordance with Laois County Council's requirements.
- The applicant must liaise with Laois County Council's Area Office on the proposed turbine delivery route regarding any modifications required to the road network.

Executive Engineer - Environmental Report:
The Environment Department of Laois County Council has reviewed the planning documentation associated with this proposal and have provided the following comments/observation below:

The EIAR and NIS has been considered and found to be satisfactory and that the implementation of the mitigation measures means that it can be concluded, in the light of best scientific knowledge, that there will be no significant effects, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affecting the conservation interests or conservation objectives to any Natura 2000 site. It is concluded that the project will not, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site either directly or indirectly.

Specific Conditions:

- A Resource & Waste & Management Plan (RWMP), for agreement in writing with the Planning Authority. This plan shall be prepared in accordance with the "Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource & Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects", published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2021. The Plan shall include for all non-hazardous and hazardous waste.

The Plan shall be prepared in accordance with the recommendations of Appendix-C 'Tier 2 Projects – Minimum Contents of RWMP of the above EPA publication. The RWMP shall include proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The RWMP shall include specific proposals as to how the RWMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness.

- The developer shall ensure that all construction methods and environmental mitigation measures set out in the EIAR, the Natura Impact Statement and all

associated documentation are implemented in full, by the developer in conjunction with the timelines set out. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit to and agree in writing with, the planning authority, a schedule of these mitigation measures and monitoring commitments and details of a time schedule for implementation of the mitigation measures and associated monitoring.

- The Developer shall comply with the requirements of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended in relation to waste stored/generated/moved as a result of any activity at this site. The Developer shall ensure that all waste hauliers hold a valid Waste Collection Permit for the waste material collected from the site and that the waste material is delivered to authorised waste recovery/disposal facilities.

- The construction of the proposed development shall be managed in accordance with a final Construction Environment Management Plan, which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including measures to prevent and mitigate the spillage or deposit of debris, soil or other material on the adjoining public road network, noise management measures, dust mitigation measures, times of construction and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.

- The operation of the proposed development , by itself or in combination with any other permitted wind energy development, shall not result in noie levels, when measured externally at nearby noise sensitive locations, which exceed:

(a) Between the hours of 7am and 11pm:

(i) The greater of 45dB(A) L90, 10 min above background noise levels or 45dB(A) L90, 10 min, at standarised 10m height above ground level wind speeds of 7 m/s or greater

(ii) 40dB(A) L90, 10 min, at all other standarised 10m height above ground level wind speeds

(b) 43dB(A) L90, 10 min at all other times

- Shadow Flicker arising from the proposed development , by itself or in combination with any other permitted wind energy development in the vicinity, shall not exceed 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day at existing or permitted dwellings or other sensitive receptors.

- The developer shall appoint a suitably qualified ecologist to monitor and ensure that all avoidance/mitigation measures detailed in the applicants submission are carried out in accordance with best practice and to liaise with consultants, the site contractor, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Inland Fisheries Ireland. A report on the implementation of these measures shall be submitted to the planning authority.

- The Developer shall comply with the requirements of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended in relation to waste stored/generated/moved as a result of any activity at this site. The Developer shall ensure that all waste hauliers hold a valid Waste Collection Permit for the waste material collected from the

site and that the waste material is delivered to authorised waste recovery/disposal facilities.

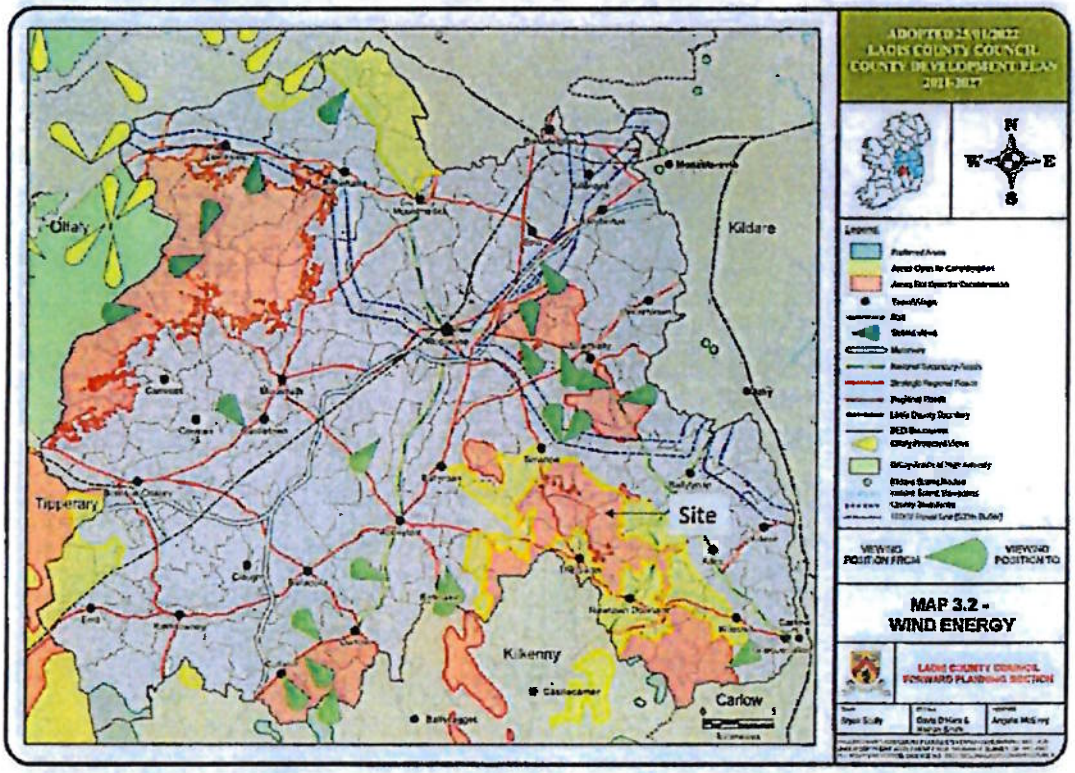
- A surface water and groundwater monitoring programme shall be agreed in writing with the Council prior to commencement of the development. This programme shall include monitoring locations and monitoring parameters. Monitoring shall be carried out during the construction and operational phases of the development.

Comments from the Roads Department are contained in Appendix 1 of this report

13.0 Planning Authority's Assessment and Views

13.1 Principle of the proposed development

The Planning Statement and Figure 7-3 of the EIAR includes an overlay of the proposed development on Map 3.2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. This is shown below.



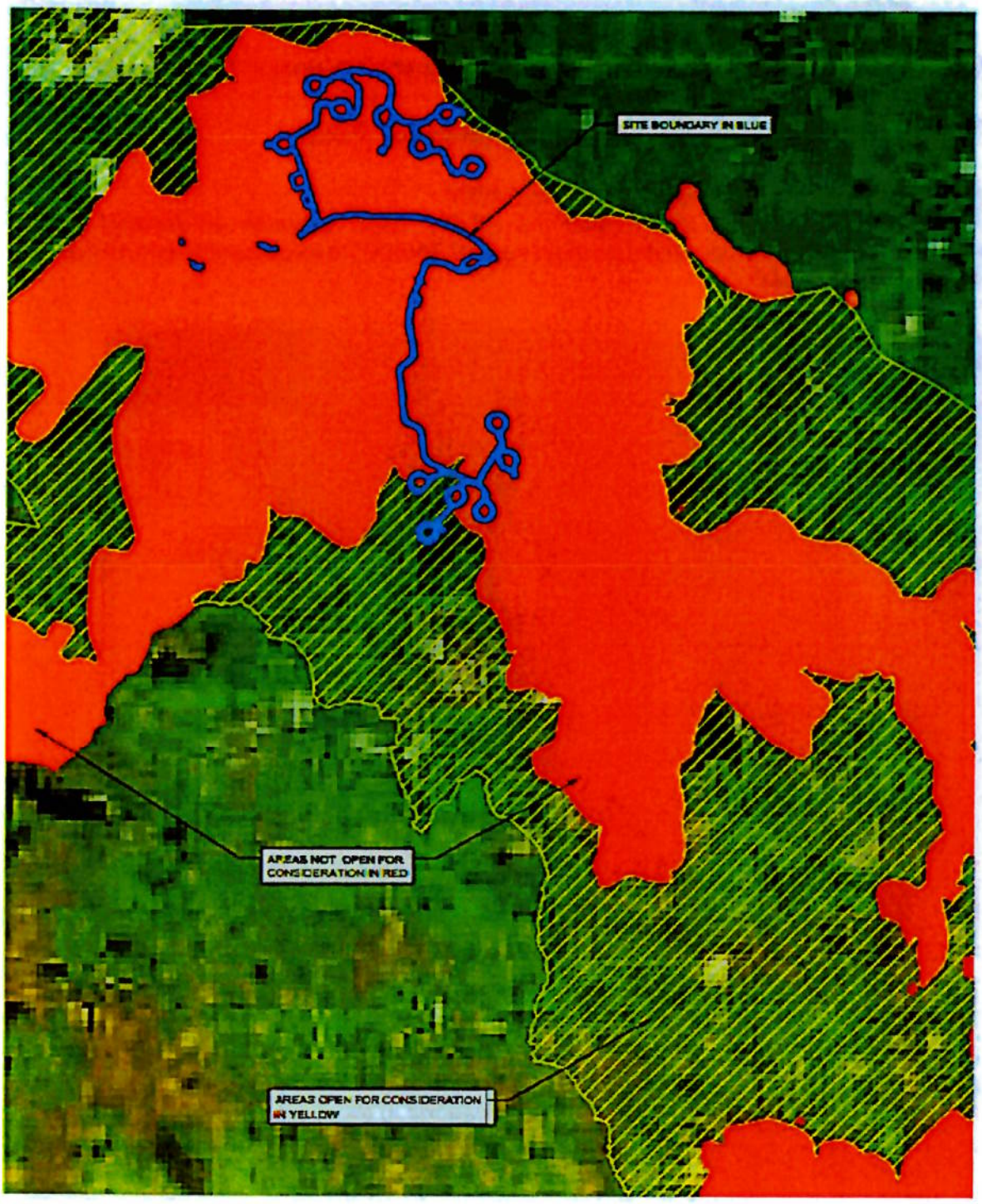
The Planning Statement then states that:

The Southern Cluster of the Proposed Development (four most southern turbines) is located within the Areas Open for Consideration designation. WES 6 Areas Open for Consideration states that Wind energy applications in these areas will be evaluated on a case by case basis subject to viable wind speeds, environmental resources and constraints and cumulative impacts.

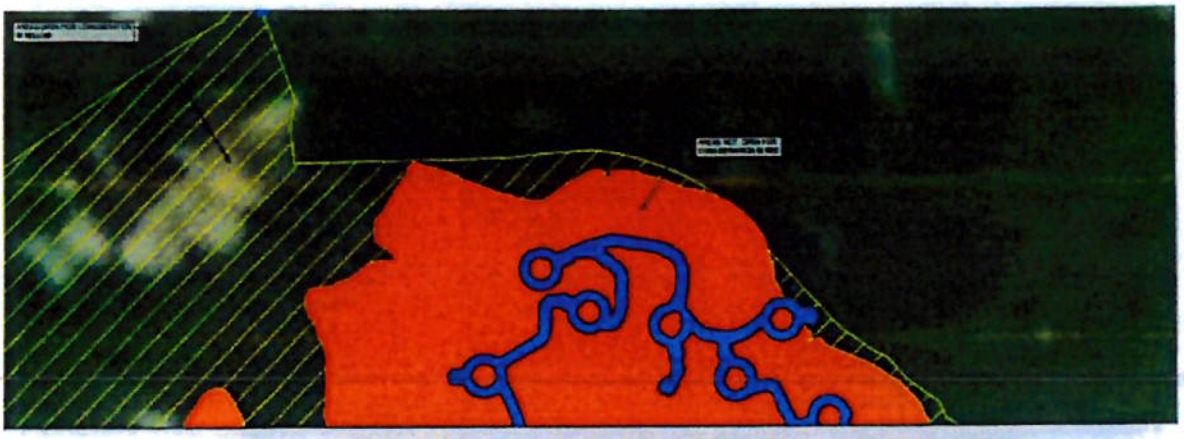
A portion of the Site and 9 of the proposed turbines are located in an area designated as "not open to consideration" for wind farm development. In relation to WES 7: Areas Not Open for Consideration, the Laois CDP states that these areas

are not considered suitable for wind farm development due to their overall sensitivity arising from landscape ecological, recreational and/or cultural and built heritage resources as well as their limited wind regime.

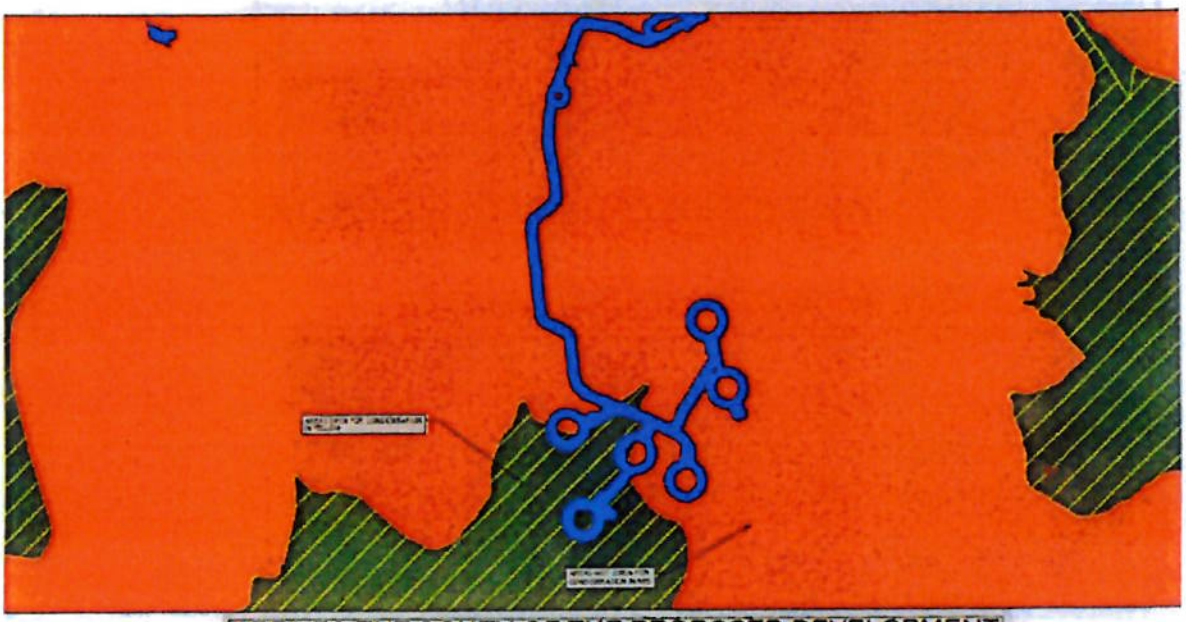
The Planning Authority notes that the layout included in the Planning Statement and EIAR is not that shown on the planning application drawings. The plan overleaf is an overlay of the submitted site layout and the Wind Energy layers.



The plan overleaf is a zoomed in map of the northern and southern clusters of the Proposed Development.



AREA TO THE NORTH OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



AREA TO THE SOUTH OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The plans above shows that 12no. of the 13no. proposed wind turbines are located wholly or partially within the Areas Not Open for Consideration (coloured red above). Only 1no. turbine (T11) is an Area Open for Consideration (yellow hatching above).

Therefore, the principle of the development is contrary to the foregoing provisions of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and associated Wind Energy Strategy (Appendix V).

13.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed development is located in the landscape character area referenced as "Mountain, Hills and Upland Areas". When comparing the layout of the proposed development above, it is noted that Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2 of the EIAR have the incorrect site layout superimposed:

Figure 7-1 Laois CDP Map 11.7 – Landscape Character Assessment (Site superimposed)

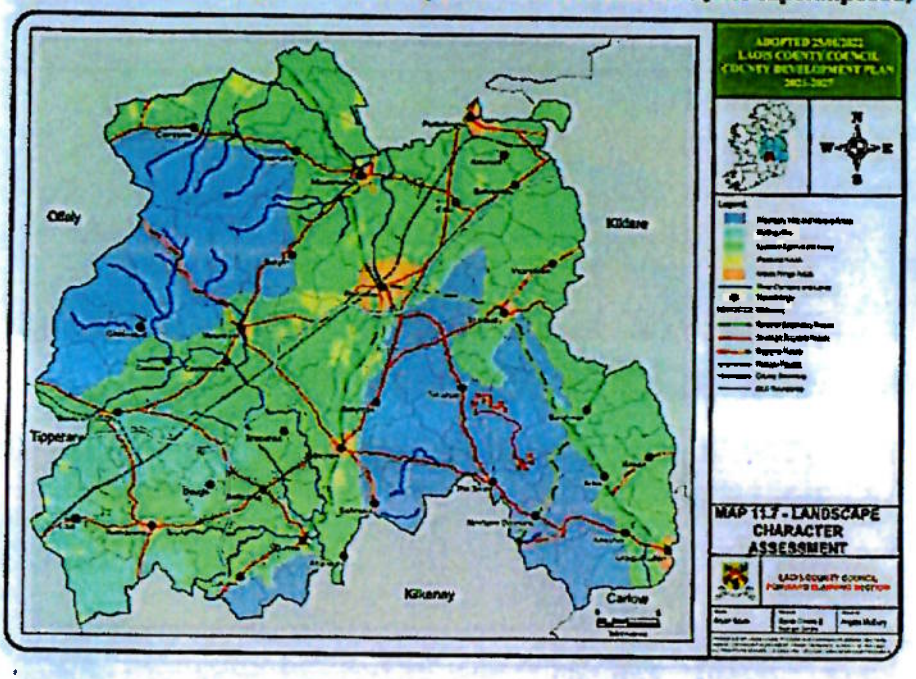
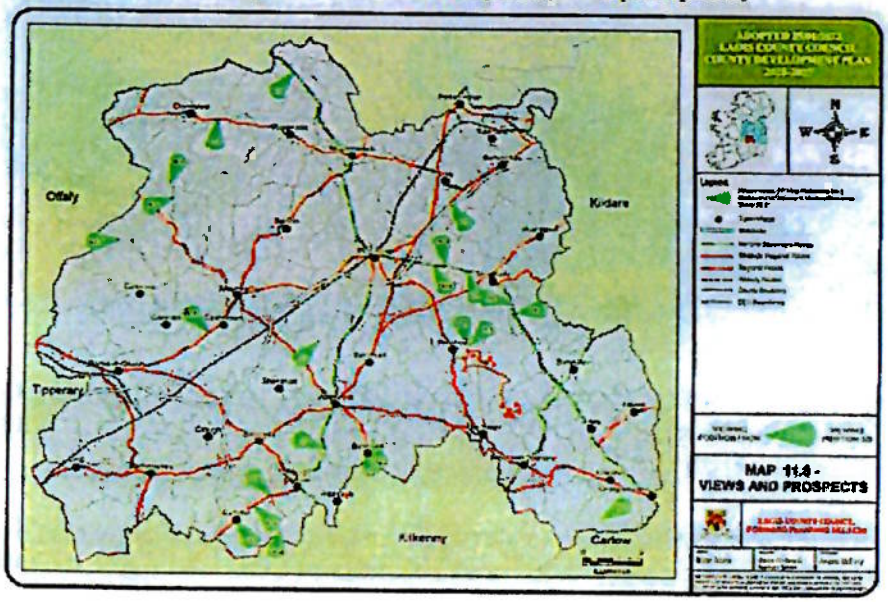
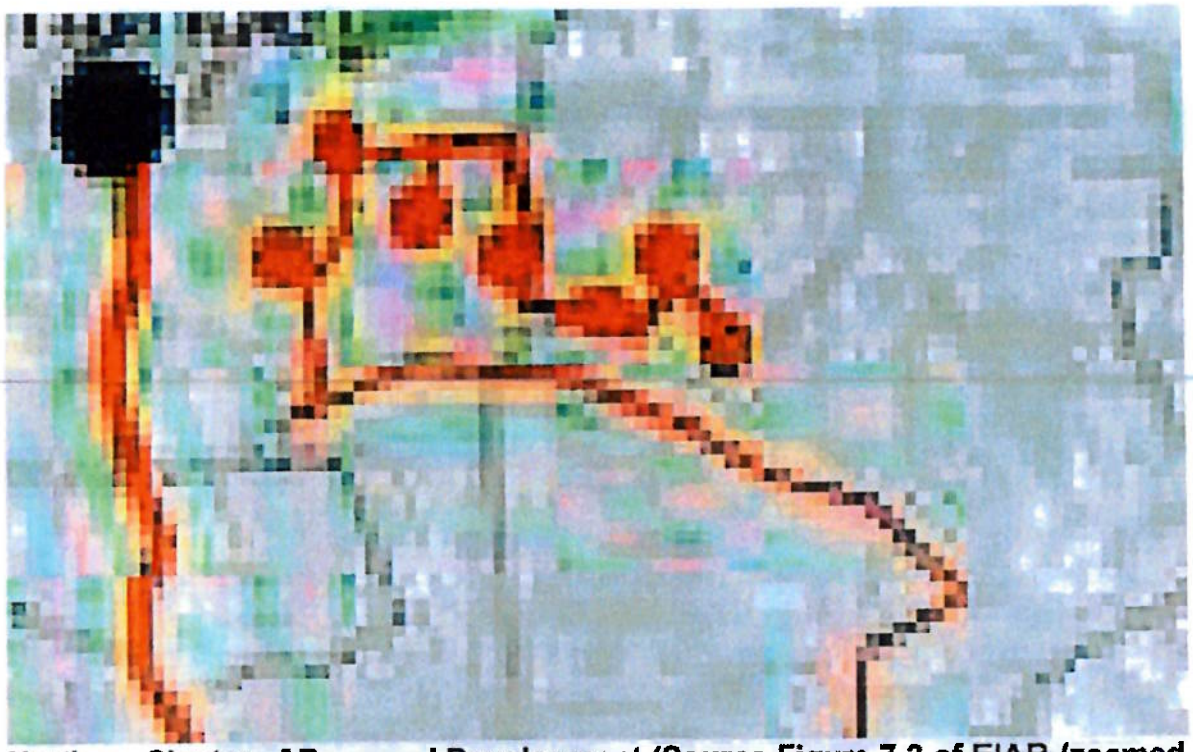


Figure 7-2 Laois CDP Map 11.8 – Views and Prospects (Site superimposed)

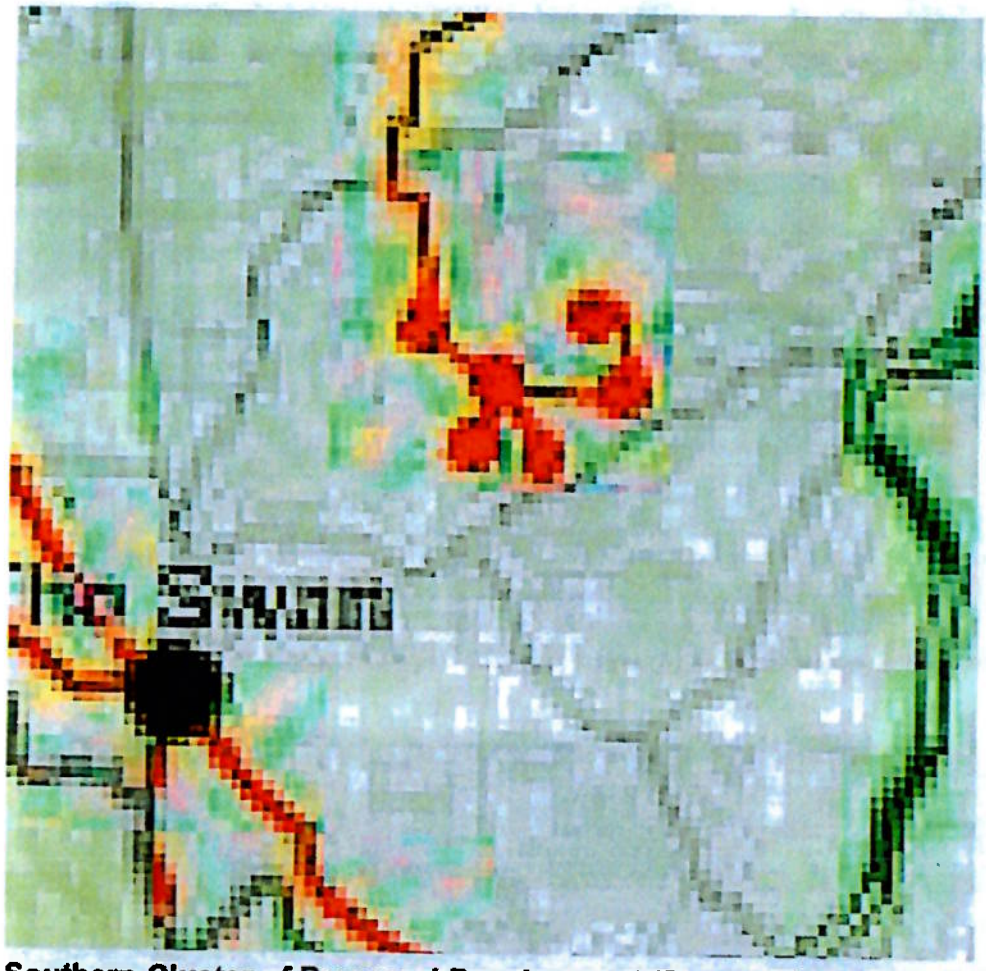


The following plans are a zoomed in extract of Figure 7-2 of the EIAR and the Planning Authorities overlay of the proposed development.

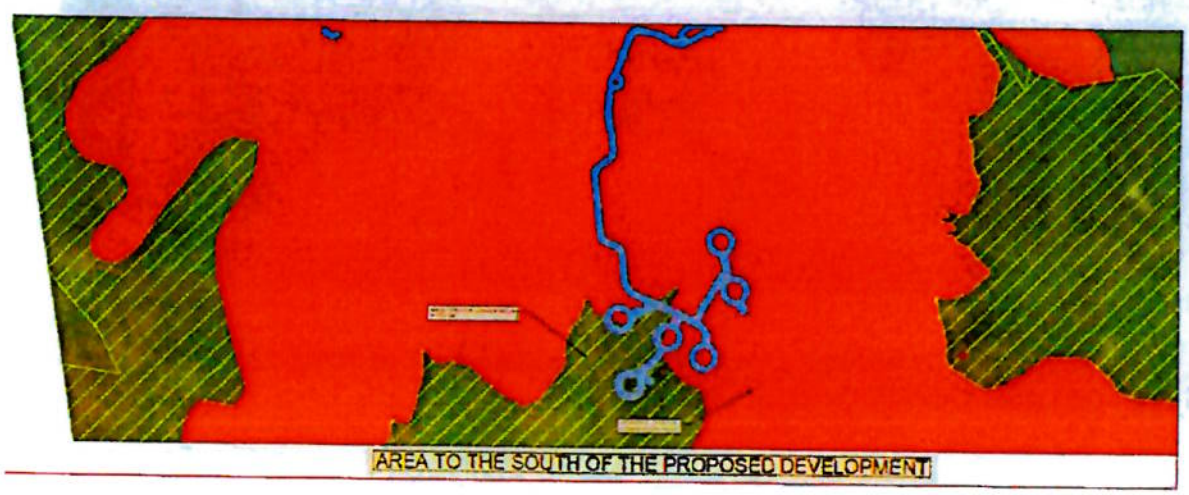


Northern Cluster of Proposed Development (Source Figure 7-2 of EIAR (zoomed in))

Northern Cluster of Proposed Development (Source: Proposed Development overlayed on Laois County Council's Mapping)



Southern Cluster of Proposed Development (Source Figure 7-2 of EIAR (zoomed in))



Southern Cluster of Proposed Development (Source: Proposed Development overlayed on Laois County Council's Mapping)

The Planning Authority is therefore concerned whether the landscape and visual assessment that has been prepared is that of the Proposed Development.

The developer should be required to confirm this, and if necessary revise their assessment accordingly as part of a request for Further Information.

13.3 Residential Receptors and Shadow Flicker Assessment

Number of Residential Receptors within 1km

The Planning Authority notes that Appendix 5.1 of the EIAR includes reference to 85 no. residential receptors within 1km of the Proposed Development. However, Section 2.1 of the Planning Statement states that there are 56 residential properties located within 1km of the Proposed Development. This requires clarification from the applicant.

Residential Receptor Referencing

As noted above, Appendix 5.1 of the EIAR includes references to 85 no. residential receptors within 1km of the Proposed Development. However, as the residential receptors are not individually numbered on Figure 5.1, the Planning Authority is not clear which property is which.

The Planning Authority also notes that the Shadow Flicker Assessment, includes specific SLR ID Numbering at Table's 14-4 and 14-5. The Planning Authority is of the opinion that the referencing to the 85 residential properties should be consistent with those referenced in Appendix 5.1 of the EIAR to ensure there is consistency in referencing and identifying the specific properties surveyed. This should be clarified, and where necessary amended by the applicant in a revised table, mapping and appendices which:

- Clearly identifies each individual residential receptor;
- The distance each receptor is from the Proposed Development; and
- The extent of shadow flicker from the Proposed Development.

The Planning Authority is seeking confirmation from the applicant the total number of residential properties within 1km of the Proposed Development, and confirmation that the application proposed has been robustly and accurately assessed.

13.4 Site Size

The site size referenced varies in the submitted planning application documentation. For example:

- The planning application form refers to 73.4 hectares at question 6 and 74.3 hectares in question 9;
- Site Notice refers to 74.5 hectares;
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report refers that it is 74.97 hectares; and
- The Planning Statement refers that it is 731 hectares in size.

The Planning Authority is seeking confirmation from the applicant the size of the site of the proposed development.

13.5 Tree Felling, Land, Soils and Flood Risk,

The Planning Authority notes that to facilitate the proposed development, tree felling will be required as part of the project. The following is referenced in the description of development:

Works at this location require the removal of existing forestry to facilitate the use of the access for the delivery of construction materials to the site and for use during the operational phase.

Felling of c 54.36 (52.78 hectares permanent, 1.58 temporary) of largely coniferous forestry is proposed. The Planning Authority notes that tree felling will be subject to a felling licence application to the Forest Service prior to construction in accordance with the Forest Services policy on granting felling licences for wind farm developments.

It is noted that whilst the proposed development is within Flood Zone C, it is not clear if the EIAR has robustly assessed the potential impacts arising from the felling of the extent of tree coverage at the site, and potential implications on flood risk elsewhere, as well as implications on land and soils.

The applicant is requested to confirm where this matter has been addressed in the submitted documentation, or if further information is required.

13.6 Turbine Design

The principal dimensions of the proposed wind turbines are as follows:

- Maximum Tip height of 180m
- Hub height of 102.5m
- Maximum Rotor Diameter of 162m

The Planning Authority have concerns regarding the ratio of rotor diameter to hub height.

A ratio in the order of 1:1 gives rise to the typical tall, slender and proportional appearance of the machines.

When the rotor diameter exceeds by a significant margin the hub height, the entire structure can become excessively dominant in views.

Taking into consideration the stated dimensions of the proposed turbines, the maximum possible rotor diameter is proposed as 162m and the maximum potential hub height is proposed at 102.5m, the potential ratio of tip height to hub height is considerably more than 1:1.

This is also considered relevant given the proximity of the proposal to the other permitted wind farm development, and the difference in the tip and hub heights between the developments, may impact upon the visual order and legibility of the developments when viewed in the landscape.

13.7 Community Gain

The Planning Authority notes that the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (December 2019) states:

Planning authorities are advised that in arriving at a decision on a given development proposal, they may evaluate the Community Report and place appropriate weighting on its adequacy and content alongside the broader site specific and energy policy factors detailed elsewhere in these Guidelines. The planning authority or An Bord Pleanála should impose condition(s) to ensure that any community investment/benefit/dividend proposed in the Community Report submitted to accompany the planning application is secured

The Planning Authority notes there is reference to Community Gain arising from the proposed development in the submitted documentation. However, there is no specific Community Report (as referred above) to evaluate, which requires attention by the developer.

13.8 Drawing Referencing

The Planning Authority notes that the Site Location Key Plan (Reference ABP-428.V02036.00787.001A, Revision O and ABP-428.V02036.00787.001B, Revision O) includes plan references which start from 2no. to 18no. inclusive.

However, the numbering of the submitted Site Layout Location Plan's range from no.1 on Drawing Reference ABP-428.V02036.00787.002, Revision 1 to 17.no on ABP-428.V02036.00787.0018, Revision 1.

Therefore there is an inconsistency in the plan referencing, which requires attention.

The Planning Authority would also recommend that the drawings submitted is thoroughly referenced, as well as cross checked with each reference in the EIAR, NIS and Planning Report to ensure that all information submitted aligns.

13.9 Conclusion

The Planning Authority acknowledges and supports the strategic importance of the proposed development as a critical element of physical infrastructure required to facilitate future economic and social development, as well as responding to issues of climate change in County Laois, the wider regions and Ireland.

However, the development as proposed is contrary to the provisions of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the associated Wind Energy Strategy. Having regard to the foregoing it is considered that the development would materially contravene the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

14.0 Community Gain Conditions

Section 5.6.3.1 of the EIAR states that all renewable energy projects applying for Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) will require a Community Benefit Fund prior to commercial operations of the Proposed Development. The contribution for RESS 3 (2002), requires a contribution of €2/MWh for all projects. Further information

from the developer is required to confirm the expect overall contribution arising from this calculation and who this would be payable to.

As part of RESS 3, the Community Benefit Fund will provide a minimum payment of €1,000 to all dwellings located within a distance of 1 kilometre radius from RESS 3 projects and a minimum of 40% of the funds shall be paid to not-for-profit community enterprises, whose primary source or aim is the promotion of initiatives towards the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The developer does not state if the minimum payment is a one-off or annual payment. Further details are required.

With respect to Community Gain, it is stated that a Community Benefit fund for the local area, assuming the export capacity will be approximately €470,000 per year for the local area for the duration of the scheme.

15.0 Section 48/49 Development Contributions

The current Laois Development Contribution Scheme (2017-2023) includes the following:

Category of Development	Rate of Charge
*Wind Energy	**€10,000*** per 1 MW output with the following add-ons: • €25,000 for each turbine in the height range of 75-100 metres • €50,000 for each turbine in the height range of>100 metres

The Council adopted a new Laois County Development Contribution Scheme (DCS) (2023-2029), which will take effect from the 20th October 2023. The following is an extract of that DCS:

Category of Development	Rate of Charge
Wind Energy	**€12,000** per 1 MW output with the following add-ons: • €30,000 for each turbine in the height range of 75-100 metres • €60,000 for each turbine in the height range of>100 metres

Laois County Council recommends that the development contribution scheme condition be included, should An Bord Pleanala decide to grant planning permission.

16.0 Special Development Contribution

16.1 Bond

In the event of An Bord Pleanala deciding to grant permission for the proposed development, Laois Council recommends a condition requiring the lodgment with the Planning Authority of a cash deposit, a bond of insurance company or other security [of sum to be agreed in writing prior to commencement of the proposed development]

to cover any damage to the public thoroughfare including in relation to the carriageway and surface water drainage.

This shall be coupled with an agreement empowering the Planning Authority to apply such security or part thereof to the satisfactory completion or maintenance of any part of the development.

17.0 Planning Authority's view on conditions in the event of the Board Deciding to Grant Permission

- Timescale for completion, operation and decommissioning the proposed development
- Turbines not to be replaced without prior consent
- Submission of a detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan prior to the commencement of development
- Details for protection measures for existing water service infrastructure
- Submission of a detailed Surface Water Management Plan prior to the commencement of development
- Pre and post road surveys (including reinstatement costs)
- Hours of delivery and construction
- Shadow Flicker mitigation
- The appointment of a traffic management coordinator
- Consultation and agreement with Laois County Council on road widening prior to the commencement of development
- Noise levels during construction and operation, including monitoring and timely procedures to address any issues of complaint
- Measure to mitigate impact on residential amenities
- A dedicated liaison engineer to be appointed by the developer to liaise with Laois County Council and the local community for the duration of the construction and delivery phase
- Appointment of ecological clerk of works by the developer for the duration of the construction and delivery phase
- Development contributions
- Community Gain
- Signage details to be agreed with the local planning authority
- All mitigation measures outlined in the submitted Natura Impact Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment be carried out in full and implemented by the developer.

J. Mulholland

John Mulholland
Chief Executive

22/09/2023

Date

Appendix 1 – Laois County Council's Roads Department comments

- Pre and post-development condition surveys of the road network must be carried out by the applicant on all regional and local roads used within County Laois used to service the construction and delivery route for the proposed development. The condition survey specifics and extents are to be agreed with Laois County Council prior to any commencement of works on site.

- The applicant will be required to rectify all damage caused to the public road network resulting from the proposed works.

- Site access improvements are to be undertaken in advance of the commencement of any construction works on site to ensure that construction related traffic entering and exiting the site can do so safely with minimal impact to existing public road users. Sightlines to be provided in accordance with Laois County Council's requirements.

- The Planning Report submitted refers to the R526, there is no road R526 within county Laois.

- All public lighting and signage to be temporarily removed/relocated to accommodate the delivery route for components to be with the agreement and satisfaction of Laois County Council. Retention sockets to be used where possible for signage.

- Prior to any junction/road widening works the specifics of any temporary works and reinstated/permanent works to be agreed to the satisfaction of the respective Municipal District Engineer. The applicant must liaise with Laois County Council's Area Office on the proposed turbine delivery route regarding any modifications required to the road network. These works may require the use of permeable paving/stabilised grass areas to accommodate abnormal load delivery routes.

- Bend improvement/access works to be suitable screened and delineated to prevent see through which may have potential to create a road safety issue.

- The applicant shall clearly distinguish between general construction access arrangements, abnormal load access and future site operation access routes in the interest of Road Safety.

- All openings in the Public Roadway and verges are to be the subject of a road opening license application to Laois County Council.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING OF LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 25TH OF SEPTEMBER 2023

SEEK THE VIEWS OF THE MEMBERS IN RELATION TO STRATEGI INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT (SID) REF: 23/317809 – COOLGLASS WINDFARM LIMITED – PLANNING APPLICATION TO AN BOARD PLEANÁLA – CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

It was noted that both Portlaoise and Graiguecullen/Portarlington Municipal Districts were briefed on this item at their September monthly meetings. The Members were circulated with a copy of the Chief Executive's report on the Strategic Infrastructural Development which was prepared as required by Section 37E (4) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). The report was unanimously agreed by the elected members with further comments made and recorded as set out below :-

Cllr Fleming

Proposed that the Chief Executive's report fully deals with all the issues that are to be raised particularly that the proposed development would materially contravene the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Wind Energy Strategy.

Also raised the following :

- A number of Public meetings have been held ;
- A number of flaws in the application which have been pointed out in the CE Report;
- Lack of consultation at local level by the Wind Energy Developer;
- Some of the turbines are 75m from the nearest well – queried impact on water supply;
- Shadow flicker needs to be considered;
- Confusing figures in the documents.

Cllr Moran

- The height of the proposed structures is exceptional- height equates to 3 round towers and blades equates to 3 jumbo jets;
- Shadow flicker – they should be 1.5km from a dwelling to avoid shadow flicker;
- The company has not engaged with the community;
- Turbines are proposed in the red zone of the Wind Strategy – no turbines are allowed in this area;
- Heritage structures are not all marked on the maps;
- Many of the birds and animals affected are not taken into account;
- During construction stage of the wind turbines, foundations are 30ft deep which equates to 170 loads of soil removal – traffic impacts;
- Number of contradictions made in application;
- Elimination of 130 acres of woodland, each turbine sterilizes 8 to 10 acres of land:
- Noise from turbines causes issues with sleep patterns;

- Wind energy accounts for 70% of the energy used but needs to be located in the correct area.

Cllr Mullins

- This is viewed as an incompetent application;
- Area is broken into 2 clusters – should it not be covered by 2 applications;
- Planning statement is inaccurate – it is stated that there are 4 turbines in the area 'open' for consideration and 9 in the 'not open' for consideration area;
- Landscape assessment not reflective of the site in question;
- What is the role of An Bord Pleanala, can they opposed the Council's recommendation and Chief Executive's report. When can Laois County Council expect to be notified of a decision?

Cllr Aird

- Seeking confirmation that the cables will be laid underground – they must be undergrounded.

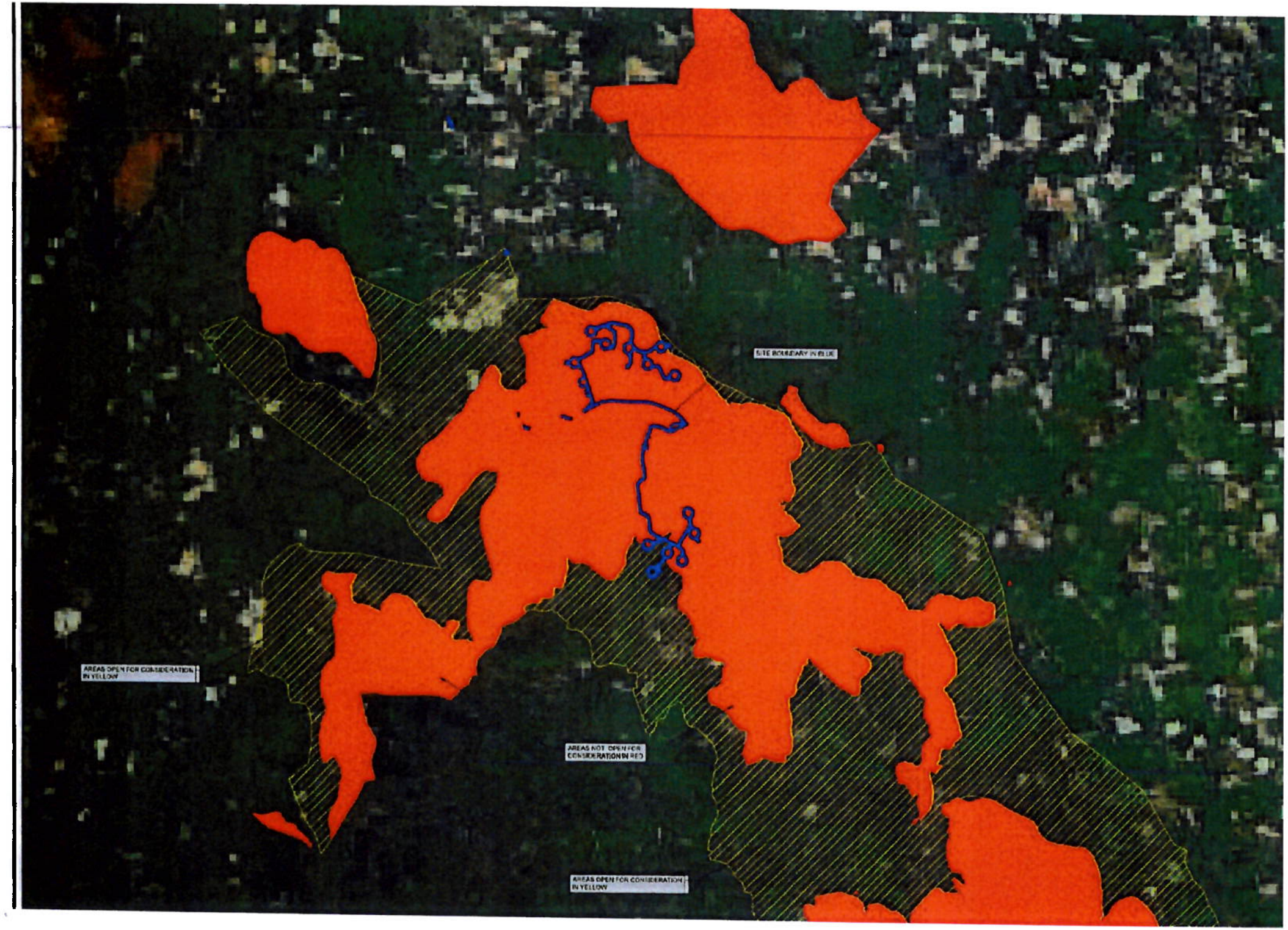
Cllr Clooney

- Supports wind turbines in the right places and this location is not right;
- There should be a levy applied.

This is certified to be a true and exact extract from the minutes of the September meeting of Laois County Council held on the 25th of September 2023

Signed : _____ Date: October 23rd 2023

Irene Delaney, A.O.,
Corporate Affairs Section


SITE BOUNDARY IN BLUE
AREAS OPEN FOR CONSIDERATION IN YELLOW
AREAS NOT OPEN FOR CONSIDERATION IN RED
AREAS OPEN FOR CONSIDERATION IN YELLOW


SITE BOUNDARY IN BLUE
PORTLAOISE AREA M.O IN YELLOW
CRAIGUECULLEN/PORTARLINGTON
M.O IN MAGENTA