Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) – Volume 2

Chapter 13 – Landscape and Visual

CHAPTER 13

Proposed ORE Capable Terminal on a 250m Wharf Extension & Ancillary Operational Support Infrastructure

Port of Waterford Company

Port of Waterford, Belview, Co. Kilkenny

MALONE O'REGAN ENVIRONMENTAL

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FIGURES

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All appendices referenced in this document are presented in EIAR Volume III

13 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

13.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR was prepared by Macro Works Ltd. and comprises a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') to review the Site's existing landscape setting and assess the likely potential landscape and visual impacts arising from the Proposed Development.

It also describes any applicable proposed mitigation measures to reduce any likely adverse potential visual impacts on the receiving environment.

This assessment should be read in conjunction with the photomontages prepared for the Proposed Development by Macro Works Ltd. and submitted in support of this planning application.

13.2 Methodology

13.2.1 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Although closely linked, landscape and visual impacts were assessed separately.

Landscape Impact Assessment ('LIA') relates to assessing the effects of a development on the landscape as a resource in its own right. It is concerned with how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, its aesthetic and perceptual aspects, and its distinctive character.

Visual Impact Assessment ('VIA') relates to assessing the effects of a development on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. This deals with how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements. Visual impacts may occur from Visual Obstruction (blocking of a view, be it full, partial or intermittent) or Visual Intrusion (interruption of a view without blocking).

This LVIA methodology that was employed adhered to the following guidance documents:

- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment ('IEMA') publication 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2013 ('GLVIA3') [1];
- EPA publication 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports', 2022 [2]; and,
- 'Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment', Landscape Institute Technical Guidance 06/2019 [3].

13.2.1.1 Scope of the Assessment

GLVIA3 establishes guidelines and not a specific methodology. The preface recognises that:

> '*This edition concentrates on principles and processes. It does not provide a detailed or formulaic 'recipe' that can be followed in every situation – it remains the responsibility of the professional to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the task in hand.'*

The methodology for this assessment has therefore been developed specifically for this assessment to ensure that it would be appropriate and fit for purpose. The LVIA Methodology can be summarised as undertaking the following key tasks:

- Desk study and Site visits in August 2023 and July 2025;

- Defining the Baseline Landscape setting and conditions;
- Identification and Evaluation of key components of the Proposed Development;
- Consideration of Mitigation Measures;
- Assessment of Landscape Effects;
- Assessment of Visual Effects; and,
- Summary Statement of Significance.

13.2.2 Landscape Impact Assessment Criteria

When assessing the potential impacts on the landscape resulting from a Proposed Development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely impacts; and,
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the landscape to change is the degree to which a particular setting can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. In accordance with GLVIA3, the sensitivity of a landscape receptor (Landscape Character Area or feature) is derived from combining judgements in relation to its susceptibility to change and its value. The judgement reflects such factors as its quality, value, contribution to landscape character and the degree to which the particular element or characteristic can be replaced or substituted. Landscape Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in Table 13-1 below.

Table 13-1: Landscape Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at an international or national level (World Heritage Site/National Park), where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at a national or regional level (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are landscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of landscape character that include derelict, mining, industrial land or are part of the urban fringe where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of landscape improvements and/or restoration to realise a higher landscape value.

The magnitude of change is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the Proposed Development and, to a lesser extent, the duration and reversibility of that effect. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct

physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the immediate setting that may have an effect on the landscape character. See Table 13-2.

Table 13-2: Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

Magnitude of Impact	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale, with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an extensive change of the landscape in terms of character, value and quality.
High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to a considerable change of the landscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to noticeable changes in landscape character and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements that would lead to discernible changes in landscape character and quality.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape or are hardly perceivable leading to no material change to landscape character and quality.

13.2.3 Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

This was an assessment of how the introduction of the Proposed Development will affect views within the landscape. It, therefore, needed to consider;

- Direct impacts of the Proposed Development upon views through intrusion or obstruction;
- The reaction of viewers who may be affected, e.g. residents, walkers, road users; and,
- The overall impact on visual amenity.

It has been deemed appropriate to structure the assessment around a series of representative viewpoint locations. All viewpoints are located within the public domain and are representative of views available from main thoroughfares and pedestrian areas within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. The selected viewpoints are considered to be comprehensive in communicating the variable nature of the visual effects.

When assessing the potential visual effects of the Proposed Development, the sensitivity of the visual receptor was weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact to determine the significance of the visual effect. The criteria outlined below were used to guide these judgements.

13.2.3.1 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

As with landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of a visual receptor is categorised as Very High, High, Medium, Low and Negligible. Unlike landscape sensitivity, however, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric (human) basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape context of the viewer,

the likely activity the viewer is engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding environment.

Below is a list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor. This establishes visual receptor sensitivity at each viewpoint location.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

In accordance with the IEMA Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment [1], visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are:

- *'Residents at home*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views*
- *Visits to heritage assets or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area and*
- *Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened.'*

Visual receptors that are less susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity include:

- *'People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape and*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life.'*

Values Associated with Views

- **Recognised scenic value of the view** (County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards, etc.): These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because, in the case of County Development Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;
- **Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas:** Again, highly sensitive landscape designations are usually part of a county's Landscape Character Assessment, which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan and is, therefore, subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the landscape around them;
- **Primary views from dwellings:** A Proposed Development might be seen from anywhere within a particular residential property with varying degrees of sensitivity. Therefore, this category is reserved for those instances in which the design of dwellings or housing estates has been influenced by the desire to take in a particular view. This might involve the use of a slope or the specific orientation of a house and/or its internal social rooms and exterior spaces;
- **Intensity of use, popularity:** This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at a county or regional scale;

- **Connection with the landscape:** This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the landscape, i.e., commuters hurriedly driving on busy national routes versus hill walkers directly engaged with the landscape, enjoying changing sequential views over it;
- **Provision of elevated panoramic views:** This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;
- **Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity:** Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;
- **Degree of perceived naturalness:** Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape, it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;
- **Presence of striking or noteworthy features:** A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape feature such as a promontory headland, lough or castle;
- **Historical, cultural and/or spiritual significance:** Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection, heightening the sense of their surroundings;
- **Rarity or uniqueness of the view:** This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain landscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;
- **Integrity of the landscape character:** This looks at the condition and intactness of the landscape in view and whether the landscape pattern is a regular one of a few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;
- **Sense of place:** This considers whether there is a special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location; and,
- **Sense of awe:** This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.

Those locations which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria are likely to be of higher sensitivity. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

It is recognised that a viewer's interpretation and experience of the landscape can have preferential and subjective components. Where relevant, judgements are made on those elements of the landscape that are considered to contribute more prominently and positively to the visual landscape resource, as well as those elements that contribute negatively. Overall sensitivity may result from a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

13.2.3.2 Magnitude of Change – Visual

The magnitude of change is again a product of the scale, extent, or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the Proposed Development. This is directly influenced by its 'visual presence / prominence', as experienced by visual receptors in the landscape. These terms are somewhat quantitative in nature and essentially relate to how noticeable or 'dominant' the proposal will be within a particular view. Aside from the obvious influence of scale and distance, a development's visual presence is influenced by the extent and

complexity of the view, contextual movement in the landscape, the nature of its backdrop, and its relationship with other focal points or prominent features within the view. It is often, though not always, expressed using one of the following terms: Minimal, Sub-dominant, Co-dominant, Dominant, or Highly dominant. The magnitude of visual impacts is classified in Table 13-3 below.

Table 13-3: Magnitude of Change – Visual

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal obstructs or intrudes into a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is, without question, the most noticeable element. An extensive degree of visual change will occur within the scene, completely altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity.
High	The proposal obstructs or intrudes into a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual change will occur within the scene, substantially altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity.
Medium	The proposal represents a moderate intrusion into the available vista and is a readily noticeable element. A noticeable degree of visual change will occur within the scene, perceptibly altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity.
Low	The proposal intrudes to a minor extent into the available vista and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene.
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not influence the visual amenity of the scene.

13.2.3.3 Significance of Effect

The significance of a landscape or visual effect is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change and is categorised as Profound, Substantial, Moderate, Slight, or Imperceptible. Intermediate judgements are also provided to enable an effect to be more accurately described where relevant. 'No Effect' may also be recorded as appropriate where the effect is so negligible that it is not noteworthy.

The significance category judgement is arrived at using the Significance Matrix in Table 13-4 as a guide. The significance judgement is ultimately determined by the assessor using professional judgement. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. Judgements indicated in yellow are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

Table 13-4: Significance Matrix

Scale/Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
High	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible

Scale/Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

Indicative criteria descriptions used in relation to the significance of the effect category are presented in Table 13-5.

Table 13-5: Indicative Significance of Effect Criteria Descriptions

Significance	Landscape	Visual
Profound	There are notable changes in landscape characteristics over an extensive area or a very intensive change over a more limited area.	The view is entirely altered, obscured or affected.
Substantial	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the landscape. There are notable changes in landscape characteristics over a substantial area or an intensive change over a more limited area.	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the visual environment. The proposal affects a large proportion of the overall visual composition, or views are so affected that they form a new element in the physical landscape.
Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends. There are minor changes over some of the area or moderate changes in a localised area.	An effect that alters the character of the visual environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging trends. The proposal affects an appreciable segment of the overall visual composition, or there is an intrusion in the foreground of a view.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the landscape without affecting its sensitivities. There are minor changes over a small proportion of the area or moderate changes in a localised area or changes that are reparable over time.	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the visual environment without affecting its sensitivities. The affected view forms only a small element in the overall visual composition or changes the view in a marginal manner.
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. There are no noticeable changes to the landscape context, character or features.	An effect capable of measurement but without noticeable consequences. Although the development may be visible, it would be difficult to discern, resulting in minimal change to views.

It is important that the likely effects of the proposals are transparently assessed and understood in order that the determining authority can bring a balanced, well-informed judgement to bear when making a planning decision.

As such, while the significance matrix and criteria provide a useful guide, the significance of an effect is ultimately determined by the landscape specialist using professional judgement and occasionally using hybrid judgements to account for nuance.

Effects assessed as 'Substantial' or greater (shaded cells) are considered to be the most notable in landscape and visual terms and may be regarded as 'Significant', albeit it is important to note that this is not a reflection of their acceptability in planning terms.

13.2.3.4 Quality and Timescale of Effects

In addition to assessing the significance of landscape effects and visual effects, EPA Guidance for EIAs [2] requires that the quality of the effects is also determined. This could be negative / adverse, neutral or positive / beneficial, and the following criteria have been used to guide these judgements.

- Positive / beneficial - A change which improves the quality of the environment, enhancing the existing view / landscape;
- Neutral - No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation e.g. will neither detract from nor enhance the existing view / landscape; and,
- Negative / adverse - A change which reduces the quality of the environment, detracting from the existing view / landscape.

The same EPA guidelines also set out categories of impact duration:

- Temporary – Lasting for one year or less;
- Short Term – Lasting one to seven years;
- Medium Term – Lasting seven to fifteen years;
- Long Term – Lasting fifteen years to sixty years; and
- Permanent – Lasting over sixty years.

In the case of new infrastructure developments within rural and semi-rural settings, the landscape and visual change brought about by an increased scale and intensity of built form is seldom considered to be positive / beneficial. Effects in these contexts are generally considered to be adverse in nature or neutral, where the effect has little influence on the landscape / views.

13.2.4 Definition of the Study Area

The Proposed Development will likely be difficult to discern beyond approximately 5km and will not be likely to give rise to significant landscape or visual impacts beyond approximately 2km. In the interests of a comprehensive appraisal, a 5km radius study area was used in this instance (refer to Figure 13-1 below).

Figure 13-1: Study Area

13.3 Landscape and Visual Policy Context and Designations

The Site is located within the administrative area of Kilkenny County Council ('KCC') and is therefore subject to the land use policies and objectives of the KCCDP 2021-2027 [4]. The KCCDP provides a framework to guide future development within the county and accordingly contains many policy objectives that deal with strategic planning issues. Within the study area, there are also sections of County Waterford (current County Development Plan 2022-2028 [5]) and County Wexford (current County Development Plan 2022-2028 [6]) within the wider study area.

13.3.1 Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Site is located exclusively within Co. Kilkenny, within the Waterford Metropolitan Area (Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan), which includes Ferrybank / Belview in Co. Kilkenny. The wider landscape sensitivities and policies are included from KCCDP Chapter 9, '*Heritage, Culture and the Arts*' [4], with reference to the 2003 Landscape Character Assessment of Co.

Kilkenny. Meanwhile, localised zoning and sensitivities (where relevant to landscape and visual) are included from the Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017.

The Landscape Character Assessment identifies four landscape character types ('LCTs'). These are Upland Areas, Lowland Areas, River Valleys, and Transitional Areas. The Site is located within the Upland Areas LCT. These LCTs are then further subdivided into 14 landscape character areas ('LCAs'), with some areas identified as being of special landscape character value and also identified features and areas of high landscape sensitivity, along with a need to protect views of high amenity value. The Site is fully contained within Landscape Character Area 'J - Suir Valley', which hugs the river corridor. The other LCAs within the study area are 'G - South Kilkenny Lowlands' and 'E: the Southeastern Hills'.

13.3.1.1 Landscape Character Area J: The Suir Valley

This Landscape Character area is the Site of the Proposed Development. In the County Kilkenny Landscape Character Assessment it is described as:

> *"The Suir valley lies at the southern County boundary, close to Waterford City. The valley moves in a west to north-east direction, parallel with the Waterford-Kilkenny boundary. It is a wide and fertile valley, traditionally associated with dairying and more recently with fruit and horticultural nursery sectors […] The slopes of the Suir Valley conform to the general river valley pattern of pasture lands rising to slopes and the river flood plain […] The river valley is perceived as having special scenic and landscape value, in particular to the west, near the towns of Mooncoin and Fiddown, and to the east around Glenmore (refer to Document 2). The area is considered to have tourism development potential."*

However, it should be noted that the aforementioned towns / villages of Mooncoin, Fiddown and Glenmore are several kilometres outside the study area.

Land Uses:

> *"The fertile valley area is well drained providing mixed uses such as agricultural and horticultural crops. Nevertheless, pasturelands generally occupy the riverbanks. Open lands with medium field parcels are generally delineated by medium sized hedgerows."*

In terms of "Critical Landscape Factors" that are of relevance this Landscape Character Assessment includes:

Smooth Terrain

> *"Smooth terrain and the generally gentle topography and landform that characterised this landscape character unit, allows vistas over long distances."*

Low Vegetation

> *"The grassland, tillage fields and generally low hedgerows of this area provide similar characteristics to smooth terrain in landscape terms. Grassland vegetation and tillage crops are usually uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility. Existing low hedgerows partially screen lowest land parcels. Nevertheless, the common low vegetation proves unable to absorb new development."*

Localised River Views

> *"This character unit follows the path of the Suir River, which is easily accessible by road. Due to the low lying nature of this area, many views of the river valley are available from the local and national roads. The main concern for natural linear*

features such as this is to avoid visual intrusion by development, which will interrupt and reduce the integrity of the river valley."

Undulating topography

"Undulating topography is presented at some sections of this character unit, where the land gently rises at floodplain slopes. This provides a physical shielding and visual enclosure of a built form within the river valley, where it does not break the skyline and thus, renders it visually unobtrusive of the overall landscape scale."

Shelter Vegetation

"Shelter vegetation is represented at some stretches of this unit by the presence of native woodland that grows on the floodplains of the river. In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms."

13.3.1.2 Landscape Character Area E: Southeastern Hills

This Landscape Character area is located immediately north of the Site of the Proposed Development. In the County Kilkenny Landscape Character Assessment, it is described as:

"The low-lying upland area bordering the River Suir Valley at the southeast of the County […] The main land use in this lowland area is pastureland, with some tillage and agricultural crops as well as both deciduous and coniferous forestry plantations. Many of the field boundaries consist of low, well-maintained hedgerows, intertwined with of Birch and Alder trees. These, combined with copses of the gently undulating landform partially screen low-lying areas. Settlement patterns outside the defined towns and villages is of a low density, consisting of dispersed rural housing and farm buildings."

In terms of "Critical Landscape Factors" that are of relevance, this Landscape Character Assessment includes:

<u>Elevated Vistas</u>

"Local roads cross the lower slopes of this upland area, from where extensive lowland vistas and afforested upland views are available. Long distance views of the valleys of the Rivers Nore and Barrow can also be obtained from this upland character area."

<u>Slopes</u>

"Sloping land provides a potentially increased elevation intensifying visual prominence over greater distances. Slope also provides an increased opportunity for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridgelines when viewed from lower areas of the public realm such as the roads and population centres in this area. Slope often provides an area with its character, as in this case therefore renders this upland area sensitive to development that might impact on that character."

<u>Undulating topography</u>

"Gently undulating topography is presented within the upland area of this character unit. The dynamic and complex nature of undulating land encloses vistas and helps to provide a realistic scale and visual containment not available in open lands."

Shelter Vegetation

> *"Shelter vegetation, is represented in some areas of this unit by the presence of trees at certain sections of field hedgerows as well as by some large coniferous and deciduous tree plantations. In a similar manner to undulating topography, shelter vegetation has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms."*

Low Vegetation

> *"Low vegetation, largely represented in this unit by grassland and generally low hedgerows is generally uniform in appearance. Consequently it fails to break up vistas and allows long distance visibility, therefore providing an inability to absorb development. However, existing hedgerows partially screen lowest land parcels."*

Localised River Views

> *"Both the River Nore and the River Suir delimit this character unit. Due to the low-lying but undulating nature of this area, views of the river valleys are available from the high points at some of the local roads. Visual intrusion, which will interrupt and reduce the integrity of the river valley should be avoided along this natural linear feature."*

Landscape Character Areas within the wider study area are included below.

13.3.1.3 Landscape Character Area I: The Barrow Valley

This Landscape Character area is located more than 1km to the northeast of the Site of the Proposed Development. In the County Kilkenny Landscape Character Assessment, it is described as being:

> *"Nevertheless, pasturelands generally occupy the riverbanks. Small to medium field parcels are an attribute of this unit. There is a large proportion of the surrounding valley landscape used for conifer forest estate plantations. It is noticeable that poplar trees are commonly used in this area as boundary screening for residential units."*

In terms of "Critical Landscape Factors" that are of relevance, this Landscape Character Assessment includes: Smooth Terrain, Low Vegetation, Localised River Views, Undulating Topography, and Shelter Vegetation.

13.3.1.4 Landscape Character Area G: South Kilkenny Lowlands

This Landscape Character area is located more than 4km to the northwest of the Site of the Proposed Development. In the County Kilkenny Landscape Character Assessment, it is described as being:

> *"This expansive lowland area to the south-west of the County has extensive views of the River Suir valley and the South Kilkenny Uplands, Tory Hill and Carrigatubbrid Hill. Distant views include the Comeragh Mountains. This area has open lands with regular (medium sized) field patterns. Medium sized hedgerows act as field boundaries where few trees can also be found. Rock outcroppings are a feature of this area. The unit is perceived as being special in landscape terms, particularly around Piltown, Mooncoin and Kilmacow. The area is perceived as being generally suitable for tourism development, and other type of projects can be acceptable in the environs of Waterford City."*

Land Uses

> *"The land uses in this area are predominately pasture although tillage and some large forestry estates can also be found. Open lands with medium sized field patterns allow good and extensive visibility to the surrounding environs[…]."*

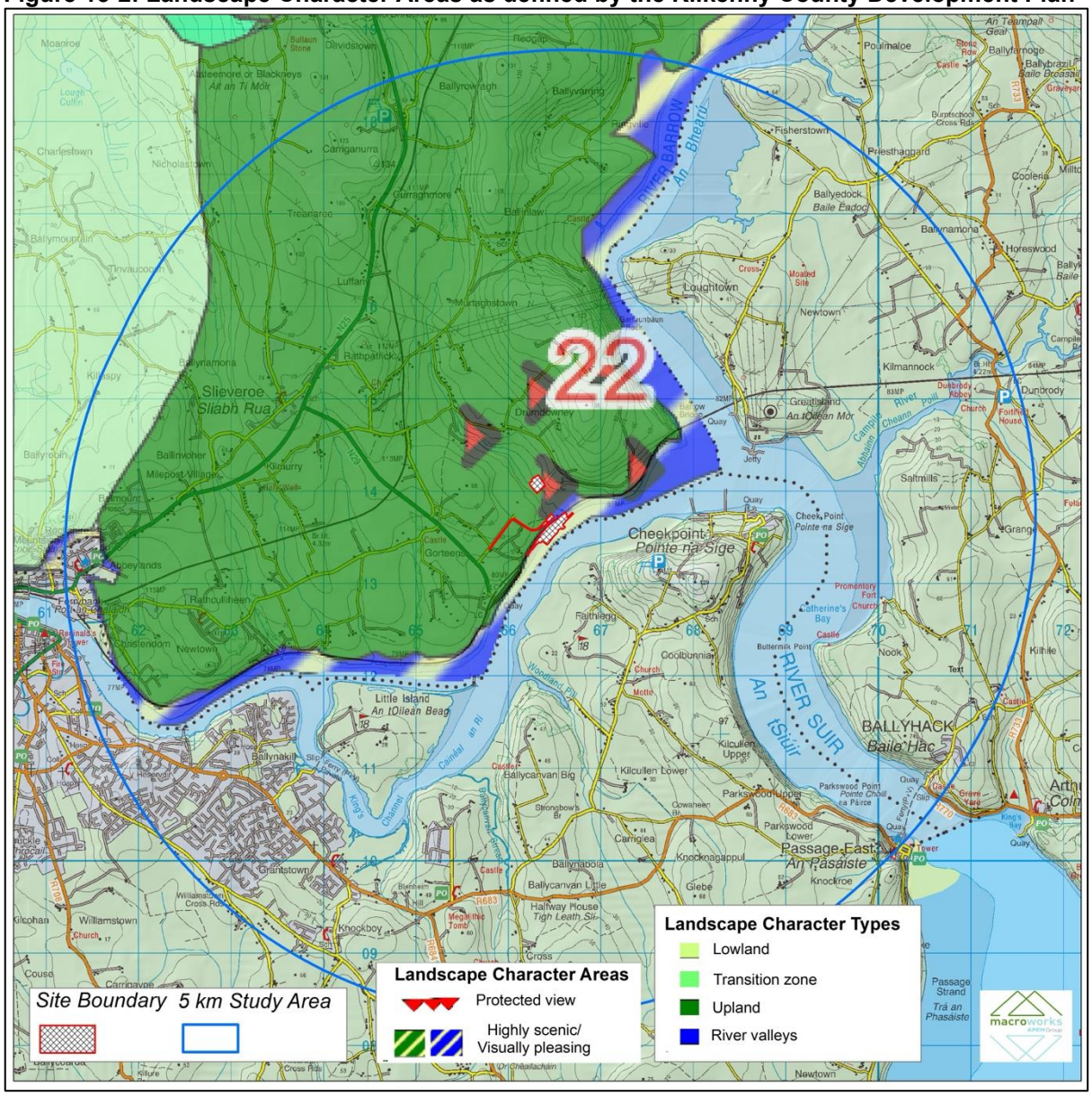
In terms of "Critical Landscape Factors" that are of relevance this Landscape Character Assessment includes: Smooth Terrain, Low Vegetation, and Shelter Vegetation.

13.3.1.5 Views of Recognised Scenic Value – Kilkenny 2021-2027 County Development Plan

According to 'Appendix H- List of Protected Views' of the Landscape Character Assessment, there is only one 'Protected View' within the study area, with the depicted view, as shown on Figure 13-2, peripheral to the direction of the site of the Proposed Development:

> *"V22: Views over the confluence of the Rivers Suir and Barrow at Snow Hill on road nos. LS7483 from its junction with road no. LP 3415 and view from road no. LT 74831-15."*

Figure 13-2: Landscape Character Areas as defined by the Kilkenny County Development Plan



13.3.2 Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017

According to the Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017 (i.e. under the auspices of Kilkenny County Council), the Site is located within the Development Boundary of Ferrybank-Belview, identified as being within the 'Employment Area' within the Core Strategy and is zoned for 'Port Facilities & Industry ('PFI')'. The purpose of this zoning is to:

> *'allow for the further development and expansion of portal facilities and associated industries, to assist in the economic development of the wider area, whilst not encouraging leakage of uses which would be more appropriately located in the existing urban centres of Waterford City and Ferrybank.'*

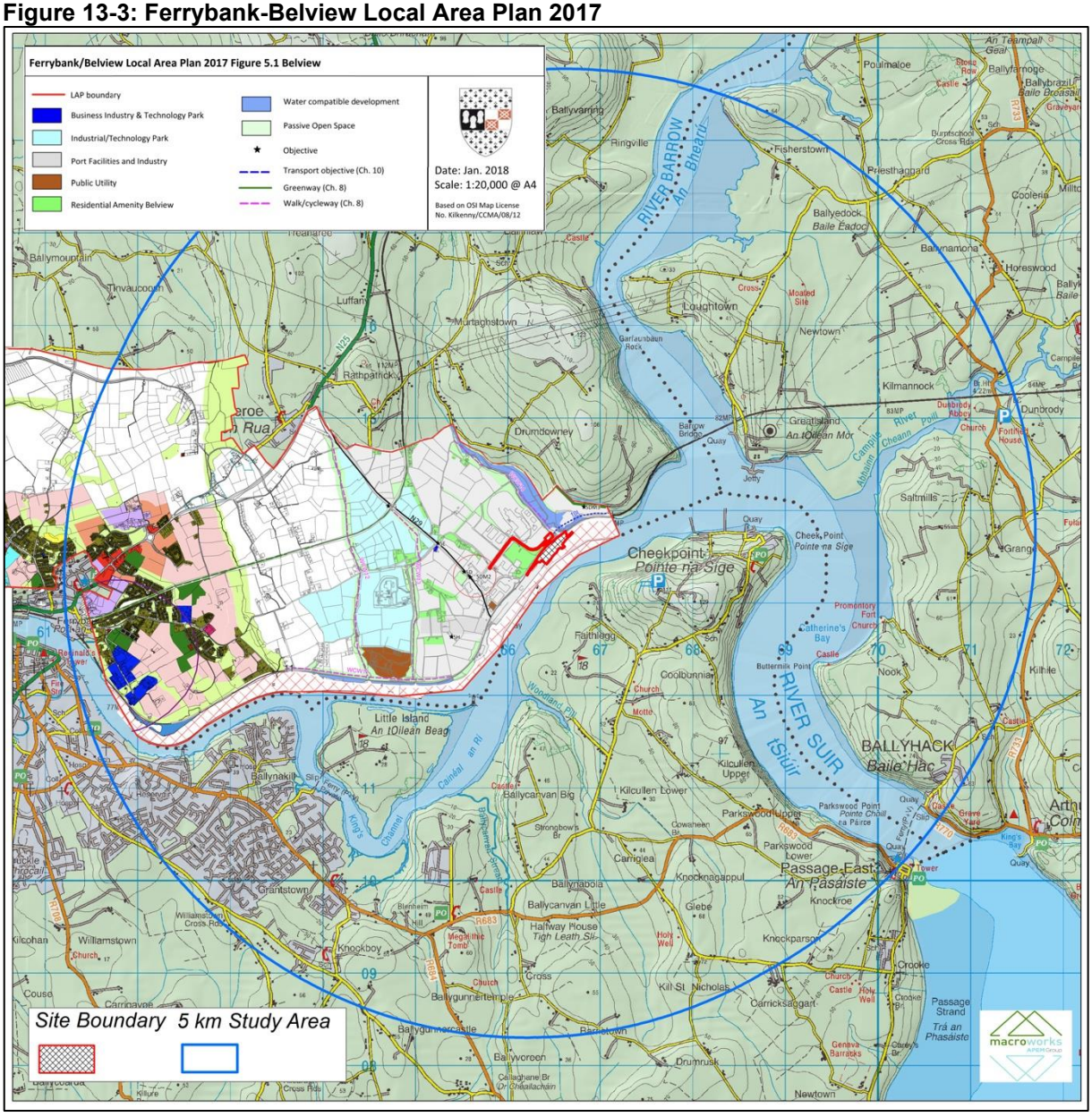
As such, the permissible uses of this land are as follows:

> *'Car/Truck park, industry (General Industrial use), Industry (Light), Port related office, open space, park and ride facility, silos and storage areas, storage tanks including bulk liquid storage and general warehousing, wholesale/warehousing.'*

Land uses which would be open for consideration on this land are as follows:

> *'Advertising board, ATM, buildings for the health, safety and welfare of the public, cafe, car repair/sales, childcare facilities, enterprise centre/campus industry, service/petrol station, recycling centre (bottle banks, etc), Shop - Convenience outlet, water-based recreational, cultural activities'*

Figure 13-3: Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017



In the immediate surroundings of the Site, the higher sensitivity landscape and visual features / zonings in the LAP include:

Residential Amenity Belview:

> *"Existing residences in the Belview area will be protected and their existing residential amenity should remain intact." … "The provisions of this zoning category need to be flexible in terms of accommodating the expansion of port related development and specialised industries in the area, but only where the amenity of existing residences is protected".*

Passive Open Space*:*

> *"The lands surrounding the Port are largely agricultural and contain many sensitive environmental features, including tree groups, flood plains and stream valleys. These are identified on Figure 7.2, Natural Heritage. It is important that these features remain protected. Accordingly, this LAP has zoned significant areas of passive open space in proximity to the Port, including landscape belts and a riverside walkway (See Figure 2.4, Development Objectives)."*

Greenway*:*

> *"The Waterford to New Ross line is being developed as a Greenway, see Chapter 8 Recreation."*

Walk / Cycle Way*:*

> *"WCW12 From the western side of the Gorteens Wastewater Treatment plant, northwards along the stream corridor to the R711/Slieverue Village.*
>
> *WCW13 From the stream on the eastern side of Springfield House north to the entrance of the IDA Business Park, to connect with the N29 at its intersection with the railway line/Greenway.*
>
> *WCW14 Along the stream corridor at the eastern side of the Belview Industrial area."*

Objective 5DM3:

> *"5DM3 Encourage appropriate screening of future developments in the Belview Industrial area. The following principles will be applied:*
>
> *Existing woodlands and hedgerows should be retained and incorporated wherever feasible.*
>
> *The protection and buffering of existing residential developments will be a priority.*
>
> *Landscaping schemes for any development should form an integral part of the overall development proposal. A woodland planting buffer of 15-20 metres will generally be required inside any industrial Site boundary unless a suitable alternative mitigation measure is agreed with the Planning Authority. This landscape buffer will be required to be densely planted with a mix of coniferous and deciduous species. In all cases the Council encourages advance planting which it considers would be beneficial to ensure some plant maturation prior to construction.*
>
> *Buildings and other structures shall be located so as to provide optimum screening and noise buffering to surrounding land-uses, particularly to existing residential properties. In cases where structures are to be constructed proximate to existing residential structures, the potential for these structures to impose on the neighbouring residential amenity by virtue of their heights and bulk should be appropriately mitigated in the assessment of all planning applications.*
>
> *Ensure a continuous landscape buffer (15-20 metres wide) at Drumdowney which is to be densely planted, see Figure 2.4 Development Objectives. This should consist of mixed native woodland and surround the entirety of the Site. This should extend west to the entrance and gate lodge of Snowhill House. Along the estuary boundary of the Site, ensure an adequate landscape buffer of a similar standard."*

13.3.3 Proposed Variation No.6 to the Kilkenny CCDP 2021 - 2027: Ferrybank Belview Framework Plan

The Ferrybank Belview Plan is open for consultation from 18th July 2025 to 19th September 2025 (as of 26th August 2025) [7].

Variation No. 6 to the KCCDP proposes:

- *To incorporate a Settlement Plan for Ferrybank/Belview into the KCCDP, as part of a new Volume 3, Settlement Plans; and,*
- *To make associated changes to Volume 1 to reflect this.*

The revised mapping shown in Appendix 4 Ferrybank Belview Framework Plan Maps. The Proposed Development is shown within Character Area 7: Port / IDA / Employment (Mixed Urban Character), with the wider study area predominantly overlaid by Character Area 6: Landscape / Greenfield (Mixed urban character).

The Indicative Long Term Concept Plan shows the Site and central study area overlaid by a mix of 'Enterprise' and 'Industry and Technology', with smaller areas of 'Active Green Space' and 'Passive Green Space'. This map also shows cycling and walking connections in the western study area.

Referring to the Draft Zoning Map, the predominant zoning in the central study area is 'PFI - Port Facilities and Industries'. There are smaller areas of 'Active' and 'Passive Open Space' and 'Water Compatible Development'.

The Development Objective Map shows a cluster of objectives and key zonings to the north and east of the Site. Including those listed above ('Active Open Space' and 'Passive Open Space', 'Water Compatible Development'), and 'Site of Local Conservation Interest'. Listed objectives are WN5-HE1, WD1-HE1 and BPIA4.

Within Proposed Variation 6 Ferrybank Belview Framework Plan, Table 5-6 Development Objectives Map References include the descriptions for each. Those listed above refer to the protection of Belview House and the Natural Designations of 'Riparian Woodland' and 'Mixed Broadleaf Woodland'.

With regards to updates to the 'Port Facilities & Industry ('PFI')' zoning, the zoning objecting and permissible uses are as follows:

> *"Objective: To provide for light industry, technology and the expansion of port and ORE related activity.*
>
> *Permissible Uses: Car/Truck Park, industry (General Industrial use), Industry(Light), Port related office, Construction Support, Data Centre, Operations and Maintenance facilities supporting the ORE industry open space, park and ride facility, silos and storage areas, storage tanks including bulk liquid storage and general warehousing, wholesale/warehousing.*
>
> *Open for consideration: Battery storage, electricity transmission infrastructure, Advertising board, ATM, buildings for the health, safety and welfare of the public, cafe, car repair/sales, childcare facilities, enterprise centre/campus industry, service/petrol station, recycling centre (bottle banks, etc), Shop - Convenience outlet, water based recreational cultural activities"*

13.3.4 Waterford County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Waterford County boundary lies within the Study Area, less than 100m south of the Site, within the River Suir Corridor.

Chapter 10 of the Waterford CDP 2022-2028 [5] identifies 7 Landscape Character Types ('LCTs'): coastal landscapes, river corridor and estuary landscapes, farmed lowland landscapes, foothill landscapes, upland landscapes and urbanising landscapes. These LCTs

are then further characterised into Landscape Character Units ('LCUs'). The LCUs that fall within the study area are as follows:

- LCU 1A1 – Lower Waterford Estuary:

  Characterised as being most sensitive with 'very distinctive features with a very low capacity to absorb new development without significant alterations of existing character over an extended area.'

- LCU 2C – East Waterford Lowlands:

  Characterised as being of low sensitivity and having 'a common character type with a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments.'

- LCU 4B – Suir Estuary:

  Characterised as being most sensitive with 'very distinctive features with a very low capacity to absorb new development without significant alterations of existing character over an extended area.'

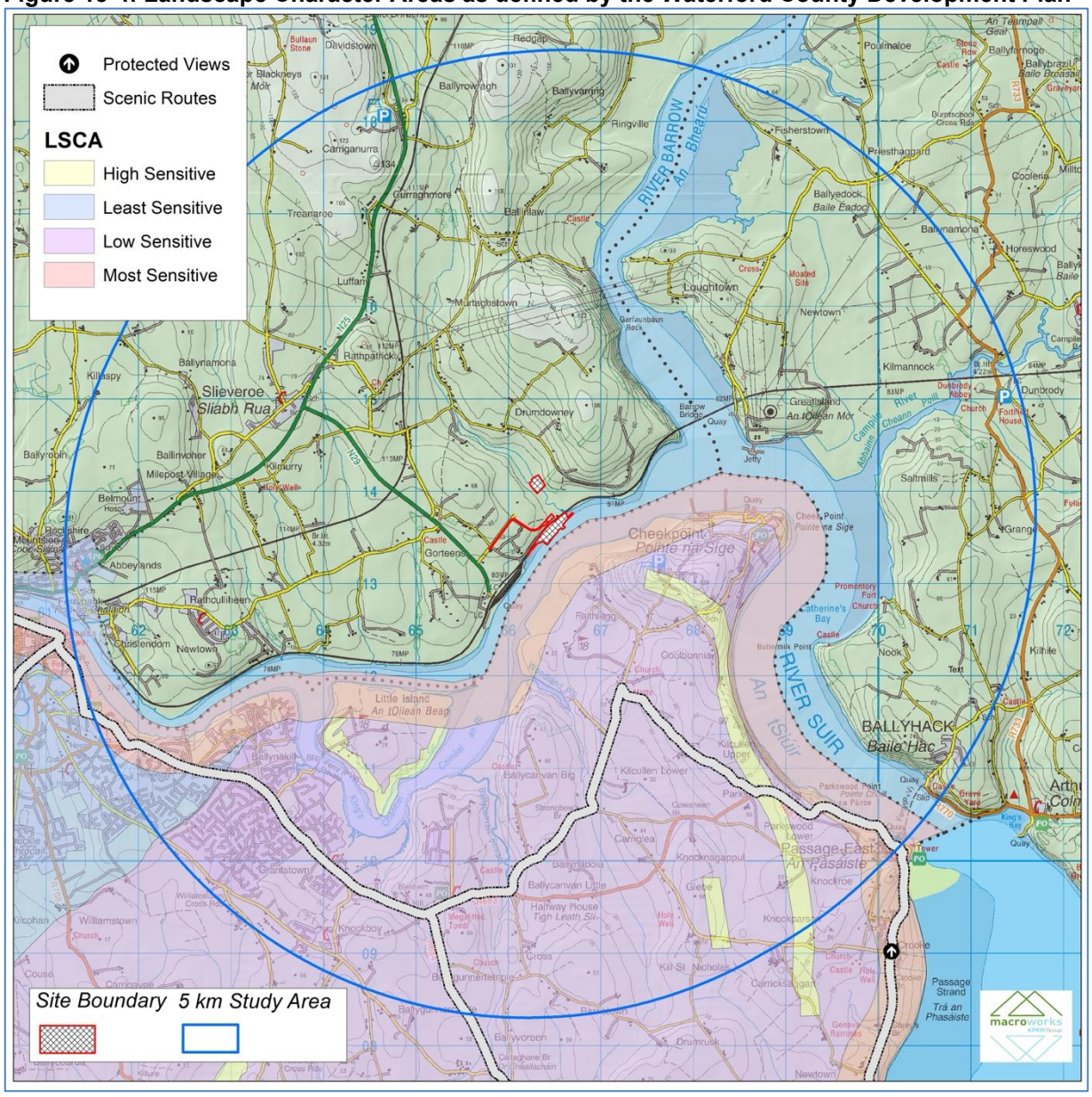
- LCU 7A – Waterford City Environs:

  Characterised as being least sensitive and incorporating 'areas of existing development and infrastructure. New development reinforces existing desirable land use patterns.'

13.3.4.1 Views of Recognised Scenic Value – Waterford 2022-2028 County Development Plan

Scenic designations included within the Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Map on the Waterford Co. Co. online map viewer include one which runs along Dunmore Road (R683) from the southwest, northeast towards Faithlegg, along Cheekpoint Road (L4082) to Coolbunna at Faithlegg, before veering southeast over Kilcullen Upper to the R683.

Figure 13-4: Landscape Character Areas as defined by the Waterford County Development Plan



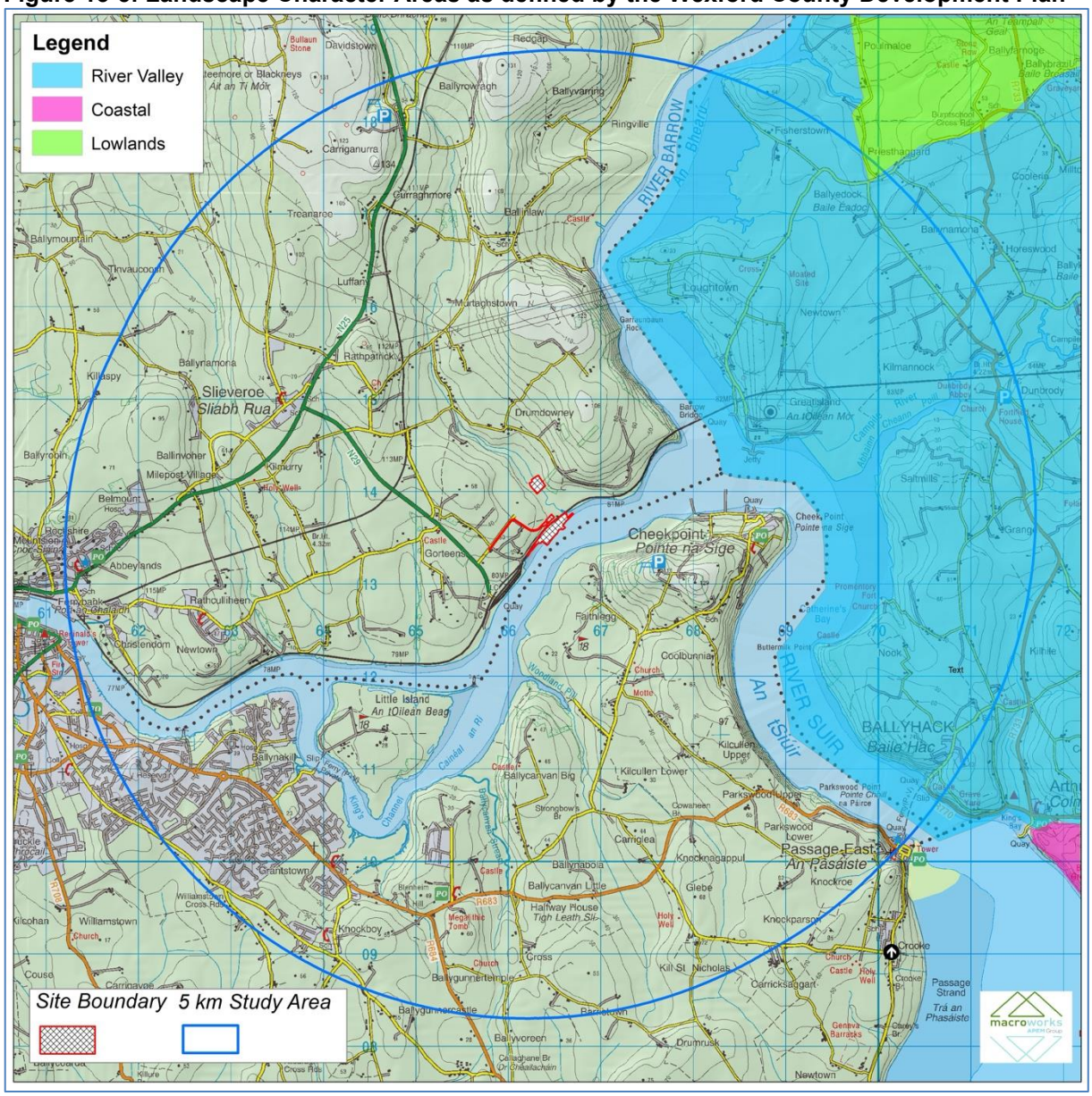
13.3.5 Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Wexford County boundary lies in the east of the study area, on the eastern side of the Barrow, Suir and the confluence of both. The Landscape Character Assessment, volume 7 of Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 [6], identifies four overarching LCUs within which it is noted that some areas contain '*distinctive landscape features'*, which, for policy reasons, are classed as an additional LCU. Therefore, there are five LCUs as determined by the Wexford Landscape Character Assessment: Uplands, Lowlands, River Valleys, Coastal and Distinctive. Only the River Valleys LCU lies within the study area. The key features of which are as follows:

> *'The Slaney and Barrow River Valleys have similar characteristics to that of the Lowlands, but have a more scenic appearance due to the presence of the rivers and their associated topography and riparian and woodland habitats. This unit is sensitive to development.'*

Descriptions of the Lowlands LCU can be found in Volume 7 of the Wexford CDP. The River Valleys are noted as having Moderate to High sensitivity to change. Development in these areas has the potential to have significant individual or cumulative impacts.

Figure 13-5: Landscape Character Areas as defined by the Wexford County Development Plan



The landscape character assessment also identifies the following approach to scenic designations:

> *"This plan does not designate specific routes but notes that scenic routes may fall into a number of categories:*
>
> *- Routes through Upland, Coastal, River Valley and Distinctive Landscapes.*
>
> *- Trails such as the Eurovelo, Norman Way, Greenways and Wexford Walking Trails where sightseeing visitors are more likely to be concentrated along these routes.*
>
> *Other scenic views include might include:*
>
> *- Views to the sea and views towards land from the sea and rivers in locations which may host tourism or amenity/journeys arrivals by boat.*

- Planned views and vistas such as those associated with planned settlement and heritage properties and gardens.

The CDP recognises the fact that all landscapes are living and changing, and therefore in principle a development on such a route would not necessarily be prohibited, but development, where permitted, should not hinder or obstruct these views and prospects, should not have significant negative impacts either individually or cumulatively and should be designed and located to minimise their impact."

As such, the locations within the study area which fit these categories are as follows:

- The local roads which skirt the eastern banks of the Barrow, in the northeast of the study area;
- The R733 along the eastern periphery of the study area where it passes Dunbrody Abbey and Visitor Centre; and,
- Ballyhack Ferry terminal and Ballyhack Castle in the southeast of the study area.

13.4 Existing Environment

13.4.1 Landscape Baseline

The landscape baseline represents the existing landscape context and is the scenario against which any changes to the landscape brought about by the Proposed Development will be assessed. A description of the landscape context of the proposed application Site and wider study area is provided below under the headings of landform and drainage, vegetation and land use, centres of population and houses, transport routes and public amenities and facilities. Although this description forms part of the landscape baseline, many of the landscape elements identified also relate to visual receptors, i.e. places and transport routes from which viewers can potentially see the Proposed Development. The visual resource will be described in greater detail in Section 13.4.2, Visual Baseline**.**

13.4.1.1 Landform and Drainage

The Site comprises a highly modified section of the northern riverbank of the River Suir. The shoreline included in the northwest boundary of the Site is predominantly engineered landform, defined by a seawall, and backed by a number of cut slopes terraced into the rolling landform. In contrast, the southeast of the Site faces the main flow of the Suir and overlays only open water.

Although a relatively modest-sized study area, it nonetheless encompasses three separate counties between two provinces. The landscape of the study area is defined by the wide river channels cast by the River Suir and River Barrow: the third and second longest rivers in Ireland, respectively. The longest river in Munster, the Suir separates counties Kilkenny and Waterford within the study area and winds through Waterford City in the west of the study area. In the northeast of the study area, the longest river in Leinster, the Barrow, drains into the Suir before it flows south into the Celtic Sea soon after it exits the study area. There are numerous small rivers and streams that feed into these large watercourses, while there is an island called “Little Island” set within the Suir channel (See Figure 13-2 below).

Landform lifts from less than 5mAOD along the banks of the two aforementioned rivers up to about 130mAOD on various outposts of ‘standalone’ hills in the far north and east of the study area. However, most of this undulating topography settles between approx. 20mAOD and less than 80mAOD. Much of the west and south of the study area along the Suir River Valley is characterised by smooth terrain and, for the most part, gentle topography and landform, which allows for visibility over long distances. Where the terrain gently rises, it helps provide a sense of visual enclosure within the river valley. This is similar to the east of the study area, on the

softly rolling, low-lying upland area bordering the River Suir Valley: undulations that serve to enclose vistas and a sense of visual containment less apparent in open lands.

Plate 13-1: The River Suir dissects the study area with 'Little Island' located within in broad channel

Plate 13-2: The River Suir from Riparian Zone near Cheekpoint

13.4.1.2 Vegetation and Land Use

The Site's land use includes partially existing port structures and a partial river estuarine zone. Immediately northeast of the existing wharves at the container / bulk handling terminal at Belview port, the shoreline is backed by the existing port access road, a crossing over the Port of Waterford rail link to the port's wider industries.

The predominant land use in the central study area is industry, mostly in the form of Belview Port and ancillary / adjacent development located immediately north of the Site. Within the central study area, this includes the prominent SmartPly Europe Plant, with the notable chimney, which easily locates the port within the wider landscape. Further inland from the SmartPly Site are a number of similar-sized warehousing developments which occupy a sizable proportion of the wider industrial area. However, the majority of them are located slightly outside the central study area. There are also large commercial and industrial sites within the wider study area, including the sizeable Glanbia Ingredients Ireland plant, located approximately 1.5km west of the Site within the IDA Belview Science & Technology Park, and a Celtic Anglian water treatment plant ('WTP'), less than 2km southwest of the Site.

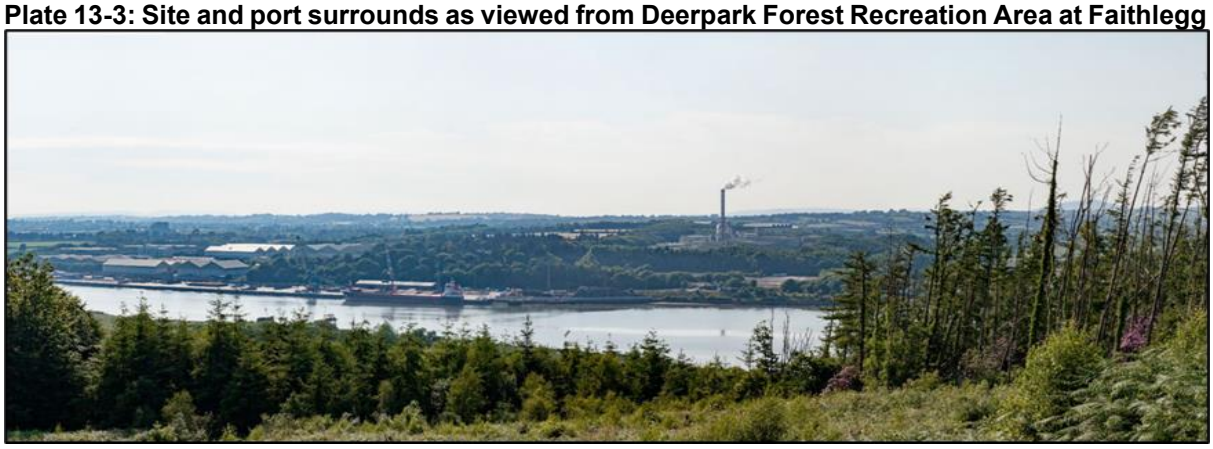
To the south of the Site, the central study area is occupied by the Suir River channel, marginal farmland, and riparian vegetation. Scattered residential areas line the local roads leading to/from Faithlegg Golf Course. Directly opposite the Site, the steep side of Minaun Hill is cloaked in woodland, while the level areas at higher elevations feature conifer forestry.

The remaining land uses across the wider study area are agricultural farmland, residential settlement, and two golf courses. In terms of agriculture, the north and east of the study area are characterised by regular, medium-sized fields, where pasture tends to dominate. Elsewhere, tillage and both deciduous and coniferous forestry plantations are evident. Several field boundaries consist of low, well-maintained hedgerows with a slant on Birch and Alder trees.

Waterford City is the largest settlement within the area, while across the wider study area, there are scattered clusters of residential development, such as east of the Site at Cheekpoint and Faithlegg, and northwest of the Site at Drumdowney. Most of the population of Waterford City lies within the study area, including Ferrybank, north of the Suir, which collectively accounts for large areas of land use in the area.

As above, the Site itself is primarily river margins and constructed embankment, surrounded by industrial areas of the port and railway. Within the Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017, Figure 7.2 Natural Heritage Features, the shoreline and immediate surrounds of the Site include Riparian Woodland (Habitat code WN5), Mixed Broadleaved Woodland (Habitat code WD1) and Reed Swamp (Habitat code FS1).

Plate 13-3: Site and port surrounds as viewed from Deerpark Forest Recreation Area at Faithlegg



13.4.1.3 Centres of Population and Housing

The major population centre in the study area is Waterford City. While the centre of the city is not located within the study area, the large suburb of Ballynakill covers the southwestern corner of the Site at 3-5km from the Site. Waterford is a settlement that dates back to at least 853 AD. According to the 2022 Census, over 60,000 people live in the city, with a wider metropolitan population of more than 80,000. Ferrybank, opposite Waterford on the northern side of the Suir, extends to within 2.5km west of the Site. While there are some small settlements or larger clusters of built form in the study area, such as Cheekpoint and Faithlegg in County Waterford, most dwellings are within linear / ribbon developments along country roads, such as across Minaun Hill, on the opposite side of the Suir, and Drumdowney to the north of the Site. Owing to its proximity to Waterford City, these linear settlements are particularly prevalent in the western half of the study area.

13.4.1.4 Transport Routes

The Suir estuary, as well as Belview Port, is a major transport hub for freight cargo in and out of Ireland, while both the Suir and Barrow Rivers have served as important transport routes in this region for more than 1000 years. More recently, the study area serves as the home of two

busy National roads: the N25 & the N29, with the latter running to within 750m of the Site's western edge. There are at least eight different regional roads in the study area, as well as a well-worn matrix of third-class roads serving the local community. Within the City, well-used rail lines connect the City to Dublin and to Limerick, while a short, commercial / freight-only rail line runs between Waterford City and Belview along the northern edge of the Suir, skirting the shoreline immediately north of the Site. Furthermore, there's an abandoned rail line running within 1.7km northwest of the Site's northern boundary. The Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan 2017 also notes the use of the port for cruise ships. The Waterford Port website (updated May 2024) schedule notes multiple visits each month over the Summer while the larger ships (over 1000 pax.) anchor off at Dunmore East. Those scheduled to dock at Belview list a capacity of 650 passengers plus crew, representing a temporary influx of a notable number of viewers throughout the year. These are also relevant as tourism receptors / features.

13.4.1.5 Tourism, Heritage and Public Amenities

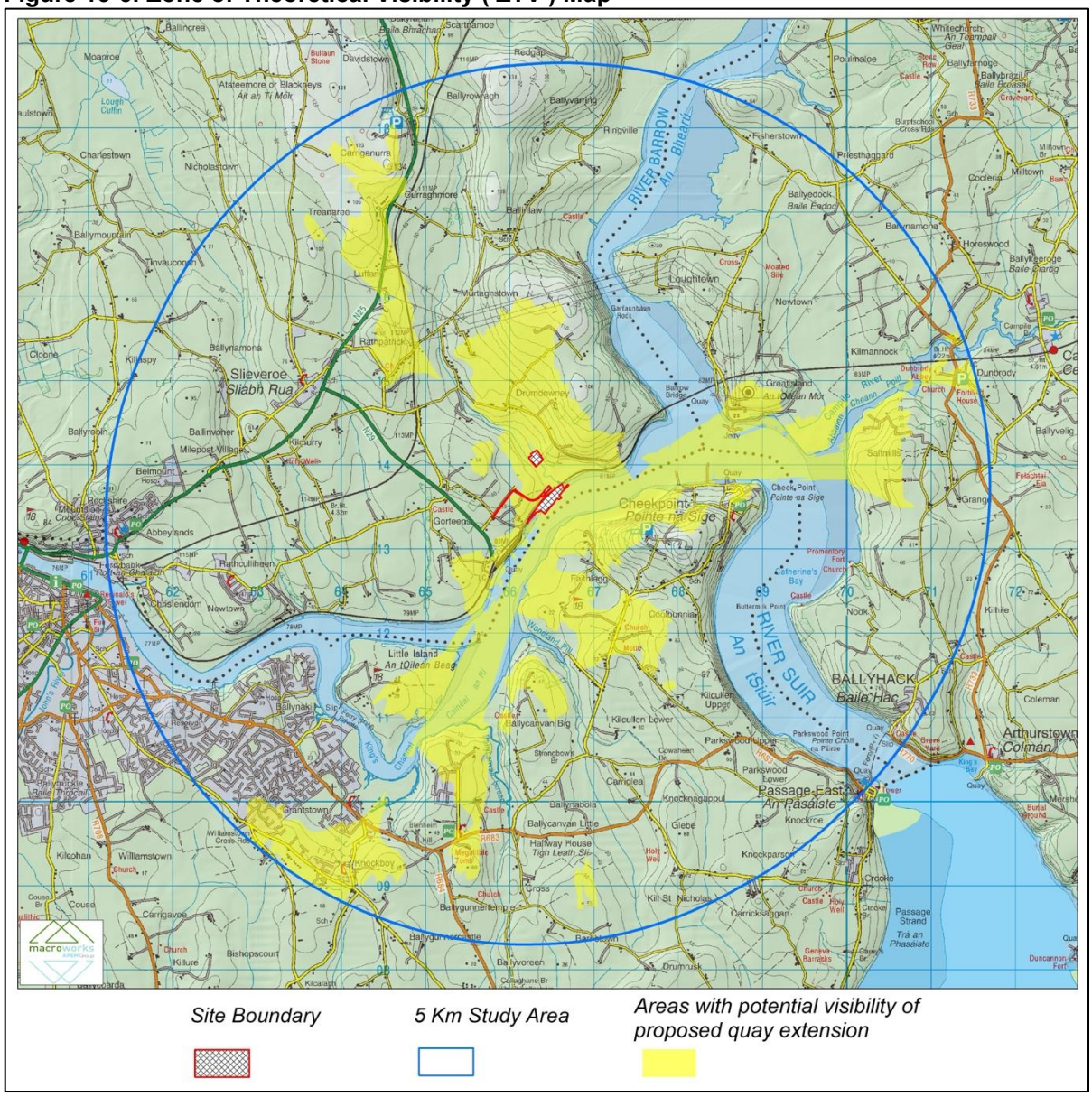
In the central study area, there are two renowned golf courses on the southern banks of the Suir: Waterford Castle Hotel & Golf Resort, approx. 2km southwest of the Site, and Faithlegg Golf Club, approx. 900m southeast of the Site, on the opposite (southern) side of the Suir. There are several areas with more discrete heritage features or amenity values, such as the remnants of Snowhill House to the northeast of the Site and Barrow Bridge to the east. Larger features to the east include Kilmokea Manor and Gardens (3.5km east) and Dunbrody Abbey (4.5km east). Further to the south, there are local recreation features in a walk to the top of Minaun Hill, c. 2.5km from the Site, and Coillte Deer Park Forest Recreational Area, c. 2km to the south, as well as an informal local walking trail along the water's edge southwest of Cheekpoint.

Numerous sporting and cultural amenities are centred within Waterford City, marginally outside of the study area. In the sporting / outdoors realm, these include Waterford GAA Grounds, Ferrybank Sports Ground, Williamstown Golf Club, Waterford Golf Club and Waterpark Rugby Club. There is also a marina and jetty for recreational boating craft along Merchants Quay (i.e. the south bank of the Suir, within the city centre) and the Waterford-Dungarvan Greenway. There are numerous historic, cultural and tourist attractions within the city, including the Viking Triangle and Reginald's Tower.

13.4.2 Visual Baseline

Only those parts of the receiving environment that potentially afford views of the Proposed Development are of concern to this section of the assessment. A computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV') map has been prepared to illustrate where the Proposed Development will be potentially visible from (see Figure 13-2 below). The ZTV map is based solely on terrain data (bare ground visibility) and ignores features such as trees, hedges or buildings, which may screen views. Given the complex vegetation patterns within this landscape, the main value of this form of ZTV mapping is to determine those parts of the landscape from which the Proposed Development will definitely not be visible due to terrain screening within the 5km study area.

Figure 13-6: Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV') Map



The following key points are illustrated by the 'bare-ground' ZTV map:

- There are large areas of limited or no visibility of the Proposed Development due to the location within a relatively enclosed section of the River Suir and surrounding undulating terrain;
- Areas of visibility are limited to three narrow sections of the study area, in line with the surrounding landform and the River Corridor;
- To the north and northwest of the site, up the slope of Drumdowney/Snow Hill, where there is theoretical visibility from 0-2km along the northeast of the Luffany Stream corridor, before switching to the west side of the stream, in a narrow band to the northern border of the study area;
- Finally, the third direction of visibility is to the east over the confluence of the Suir and Barrow, continuing across Great Island Power Station and up the Campile River Corridor to the periphery of the study area; and,

- Other than this small section, the entirety of the Barrow corridor is screened by landform, as is the section of the Suir downstream of Great Island / Cheekpoint, and north along the Suir from Little Island, from Gorteens to Ferrybank is clear of visibility, as is the waterside suburbs of Waterford City.

The most important point to make in respect of this 'bare-ground' ZTV map is that it is theoretical. The Proposed Development will not rise markedly above the underlying terrain and river. It will, therefore, be considerably screened by surrounding and intervening hedgerow vegetation, trees and numerous buildings, walls and embankments scattered throughout the study area, resulting in a much lesser degree of actual visibility. While the various buildings proposed as a part of the Proposed Development will be the primary source of theoretical visibility, many of the larger elements comprise a low-lying built form and will not be prominently visible, even in the immediate surroundings of the Proposed Development, where existing port infrastructure is already located.

13.4.2.1 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment

Viewshed Reference Points ('VRPs') are the locations used to study the visual impacts of a Proposed Development in detail. It is not warranted to include each and every location that provides a view of a development, as this would result in an unwieldy report and make it extremely difficult to draw out the key impacts arising from the Proposed Development. Instead, the selected viewpoints are intended to reflect a range of different receptor types, distances and angles. The visual impact of a Proposed Development was assessed by Macro Works using up to 6 categories of receptor type as listed below;

- Key Views (from features of national or international importance) ('KV');
- Designated Scenic Routes and Views ('SR/SV');
- Local Community views ('LCV');
- Centres of Population ('CP');
- Major Routes ('MR'); and,
- Amenity and heritage features ('AH').

VRPs might be relevant to more than one category, and this makes them even more valid for inclusion in the assessment. The receptors that are intended to be represented by a particular VRP are listed at the beginning of each viewpoint appraisal. The Viewshed Reference Points selected in this instance are set out in Table 13-6 and Figure 13-3 below.

Table 13-6: Outline Description of Viewshed Reference Points

VRP No.	Location	Representative of:	Direction of View
VP1	Great Island at Barrow Bridge	LCV, DSV	SW
VP2	Local Road northwest of Site at Drumdowney Upper	LCV, DSV	SE
VP3	Local Road north of Site at Drumdowney Upper	LCV, DSV	S
VP4	Cheekpoint Pier	LCV, CP, AH	W
VP5	Local river walk southeast of Site at Cheekpoint	LCV, AH	W
VP6	Deer Park Forrest Recreational Area at Faithlegg	AH, LCV	W
VP7	Minaun Hill	AH, LCV	W
VP8	The Fairways at Faithlegg	LCV	E
VP9	Faithlegg Golf Course	AH, CP	E

VRP No.	Location	Representative of:	Direction of View
VP10	St Nicholas Church, Faithlegg	LCV, AH	NE
VP11	Cheekpoint Road (L4082) at Coolbunna	DSV, LCV	NW

Figure 13-7: Viewpoint Location Map

13.5 Characteristics & Potential Effects of the Proposed Development

As indicated in Section 13.2, the potential impacts of the Proposed Development will be divided between landscape impact and visual impacts, weighing receptor sensitivity against the magnitude of effects in both instances.

13.5.1 Do-nothing scenario

The '*do-nothing'* impact refers to the non-implementation of the Proposed Development. The primary effect of this would be that the impacts and effects identified would not directly occur. In this regard, the following issues are relevant. The Site, which is currently the highly modified transition between the river Suir and the rail line, port and surrounding batter slopes, would likely continue to be influenced by various modes of large-scale shipping traffic, rail movement and the movement of associated goods and services. Whilst the surrounding perimeter

vegetation would continue to grow out, with periodic maintenance from the port, the overall characteristics would remain similar to the existing baseline.

13.5.2 Landscape Character Value and Sensitivity

Landscape value and sensitivity are considered in relation to a number of factors highlighted in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013, which are set out below and discussed relative to the Proposed Development Site and wider study area.

This is a complex landscape that comprises a mix of land uses, many of which are associated with Belview / Waterford Port complex. While some portions of the study area present as a rural hinterland setting, this is principally a landscape strongly influenced by industrial, commercial and transport infrastructure land use and residential and urban areas. Within the central study area, there is a range of industrial, residential and rural land uses that weave together in a manner that has depth and diversity, but not necessarily a high degree of land use integrity. Nevertheless, land is well utilised with few neglected or degraded areas.

The LAP provides mapped zoning objectives to facilitate the proposed scheme, while the surrounding waterways are typically designated higher sensitivity in the respective County Development Plan; however, it is not considered that the northern bank is highly sensitive and instead is heavily influenced by numerous contrasting anthropogenic landscape features. The area of Co. Kilkenny to the north of the Site transitions from industrial and port-related uses to rural and residential, dissected by the N29 and N25 corridor north to west, with the R711 to the southwest into Ferrybank and Waterford.

To the south of the Site, on the southern side of the county border, the Co. Waterford bank of the Suir and Barrow, and Little Island/Kings Channel generally feature higher landscape integrity and more traditional landscape amenity. The historic value of Waterford Castle and Faithlegg House, with modified grounds to host the respective Golf Courses, retaining some of the Demesne/Parkland characteristics which contribute to the wider landscape characteristics, in particular when viewed from the elevated Minaun Hill. Minaun Hill and Cheekpoint feature a slightly more rural landscape, including several woodland / forestry blocks over the steeper sections of the headland. Cheekpoint is a small, stacked settlement which faces northeast to the confluence of the Suir and Barrow. The waterside amenity of Cheekpoint is buffered from Waterford Port and Great Island Power Station by the vegetated headland of Drumdowney Upper, one of the areas in the northern central study area with a more cohesive rural character.

This is reiterated by the presence of the scenic designations within the study area, being located over Drumdowney Upper, and in Waterford across the upper sections of the headland between the R683 and Faithlegg. Finally, the eastern shore of the River Barrow and eastern periphery of the study area are the most uniform rural components of the study area, with the only exceptions to this being the Great Island Power station and the slightly higher landscape values at Dunbrody Abbey and Kilmokea Manor, both of which are set more than 3km from the Site. As discussed in the baseline section, the Wexford CDP does not identify specific scenic designation but rather categorises different features likely to have higher sensitivity, including routes with views of waterways.

In summary, while the overall study area has a relatively low degree of landscape integrity, each of the different counties and respective sections of the river corridor are more cohesive. Nonetheless, landscape values of the central study area are strongly associated with the busy working port complex, with a secondary rural and residential overlay, and finally, landscape values associated with tourism, through the hosting of cruise ships and the presence of Waterford Castle and Faithlegg Golf Courses. The mix of land uses and character is typical of major waterways across Ireland as a source of natural amenity, as well as highly modified areas hosting evolving historic and present-day settlements, transport hubs and trade centres.

The Kilkenny County Development Plan (2021-2027), Waterford County Development Plan (2022-2028), Wexford County Development Plan (2022-2028) and the Ferrybank/Belview Local Area Plan each identify several landscape or visual sensitivities and vulnerabilities within the wider environs of the Proposed Development; however, the immediate surrounds are restricted to the Kilkenny CDP / Ferrybank LAP scenic designation listed above. The southern Suir and Barrow banks are of higher sensitivity across the wider southern and eastern study area, with a lower proportion of significant industrial land uses, and a higher proportion of smaller, residential, recreational or historic land uses.

Despite its coastal location, the study area is a landscape influenced by highly anthropogenic features such as large warehouses, business parks and major transport corridors and is not considered distinctive or sensitive on a local, regional or national level. Therefore, on balance of these factors and in accordance with the criteria outlined in Table 13-1, the landscape sensitivity is deemed to be **Medium**, with localised areas of higher and lower sensitivity.

13.5.3 Assessment of Receptor Sensitivity – Visual

Reflecting the wider landscape patterns across the study area, the combination of different land uses and landscape features serve to divide the sensitivity of the visual receptors.

13.5.3.1 Sensitivity of Designated Scenic Routes and Views (SR/SV)

The more elevated and scenic parts of the surrounding landscape are typically identified by the presence of scenic routes and view designations, with the exception of Co. Wexford which identifies categories rather than specific routes. The identification within the CDP is the one of many considerations in the sensitivity of a view, and scenic views and routes can have very different degrees of sensitivities and values. Within the study area, the scenic designations are either located across elevated areas (Co. Waterford) or with views of the large rivers in the central study area (Co. Kilkenny and Co. Wexford). In both instances, while these routes and views avail of a degree of scenic amenity, many also present with a longstanding sense of human intervention on the landscape and are influenced by an array of working and highly anthropogenic land uses such as the ports, agriculture, and settlements. As such, the scenic designations across the study area range in sensitivity between Medium to High-medium depending on their influence from other surrounding landscape area.

The most relevant scenic routes to the Proposed Development are those located nearest to it and which have the most potential to afford near and clear views of the Proposed Development. Those relevant to the project are represented by VP1, VP2, VP3, and VP11. Many of these are also representative of other receptors; however, their primary purpose within this assessment and source of sensitivity is the scenic designation applied by the relevant County Development Plan.

Viewpoint 1 at the Barrow Bridge is representative of the nearby local road and residences, designated within the Wexford CDP through proximity to the Barrow. The viewpoint and surroundings are highly modified; the primary significance of this assessment is the designation applied to them, as the views are not particularly rare or unique views featuring striking or noteworthy features. Therefore, the viewpoint sensitivity is deemed Medium. The same is true of VP2 and VP3, located along the local road across Drumdowney to the north of the Site, V22 in the Ferrybank LAP. The designated route features open views to the south, encompassing the highly modified context. The SmartPly stack and Suir Shipping are visible from V22, while the viewer setting features a scattering of residences, which add to the modified nature of the view. Additionally, V22 is frequently enclosed by roadside vegetation, and views of the Suir are generally screened. As such, these are deemed Medium sensitivity. VP11 is also deemed Medium sensitivity, located at the nearest section of the Waterford CDP, which loops across the southeast of Faithlegg, features a higher number of viewers due to

being the key access road to Minaun Hill and Cheekpoint, but a corresponding reduction in tranquillity and naturalness through the constant passing of vehicles.

13.5.3.2 Sensitivity of Local Community views (LCV)

Local Community views are considered to be those experienced by those people who live, work and move around the study area. These are generally the people most likely to have their visual amenity affected by a proposal due to proximity to the development, or potential to view the development as a familiar feature of their daily views. The densest cluster of these views / receptor types occurs to the south of the development, across Cheekpoint / Minaun / Faithlegg; however these are located within varied settings, with views directly across to the contrasting land uses of Belview Port and surrounds. The distributed rural community views to the north of the Site, within Co. Kilkenny are generally partially enclosed by gentle rolling landform and vegetation.

Due to the scattered population across the study area, there are a number of views representative of the local community, these are VP1, VP2, VP3, VP4, VP8, VP10, and VP11. As above, VP1, VP2, VP3, and VP11 are primarily selected for scenic designations. Viewpoints 4, 9 and 11 are located across Cheekpoint / Minaun / Faithlegg. VP4 is also representative of the centre of population, heritage and amenity receptors at Cheekpoint Pier, with a correspondingly higher number of views, historic value, sense of place, and location within a sensitive landscape. As such, VP4 is of Medium sensitivity. In contrast, VP8 is located to the north of Faithlegg, and represents the local residents along the road and the community users of the sports grounds to the west of the VP. As such, these views represent a moderate association with the ‘susceptibility of receptor group to changes in view’ but less so with the ‘values typically associated with visual amenity’ which are limited to intensity of use/popularity, this balances to a Medium-low sensitivity typical of the scattered residential areas across the peninsula. Viewpoint 10 is located at St Nicholas Church, and as such represents a moderate association with the ‘susceptibility of receptor group to changes in view’ but also with the ‘values typically associated with visual amenity’, specifically 'Historic, cultural or spiritual value'. Therefore, VP10 is deemed Medium sensitivity.

13.5.3.3 Sensitivity of Centres of Population (‘CP’)

Centres of the population are generally considered to be in the mid to low range of visual receptor sensitivity because they tend to be busy, built environments where visual change is relatively commonplace. The largest centre of population is Waterford, the periphery of which is located within the southwest of the study area. Views to the wider landscape are limited, being enclosed by built form and street trees through the residential areas, which cloak much of the river corridor, where receptors are deemed Medium-low. The densest clusters of viewers and smaller centres of population across the study area are at Faithlegg and Cheekpoint. Each of these are smaller and have greater connection with the surrounding landscape, as well as being located within the higher sensitivity landscapes of the headland. Viewpoints located within Faithlegg and Cheekpoint were chosen to represent these communities, and as outlined above in the local community views, were assigned Medium sensitivity for a number of factors.

13.5.3.4 Sensitivity of Major Routes (‘MR’)

These include national and regional level roads and rail lines, and are relevant due to the number of viewers potentially impacted by the Proposed Development. Major routes typically provide views experienced whilst in motion, and these may be fleeting and intermittent depending on screening by intervening vegetation or buildings.

The densest concentration of major routes across the study area is across the northwest of the study area, where these diverge to the south and west; these are generally set well away from the higher amenity views and contexts, but rather pass through a variety of anthropogenic

landscapes within rolling farmland. The remaining major route is the R733 regional road within Co. Wexford which passes by Dunbrody Abbey and features intermittent views across the Barrow. As such, the main routes in the northwest of the study area are of Medium-low sensitivity, while the R733 is Medium sensitivity due to the lower traffic levels and greater integrity of landscape character.

13.5.3.5 Sensitivity of Amenity and heritage feature views ('AH')

A number of heritage and amenity features are included in the study area, with the greatest concentration within Co. Waterford, as well as a smaller number in Co. Wexford. Waterford Castle and Faithlegg Golf Course and historic grounds have high amenity and historic values, as well as landscape appreciation from users. However, both are private and have signage prohibiting walkers, reducing the viewing audience and mitigating the overall sensitivity. In contrast, the walks to Minaun Hill, around the Cheekpoint marsh shoreline, and Deerpark Forest Recreation Area are publicly accessible and signposted. There is also the walkway around the shoreline of the Suir at Waterford City, titled the May Park Trail. In addition to Waterford Castle and Faithlegg House, there is Dunbrody Abbey in the east of the study area, Kilmokea Country Manor in the northeast, and the smaller features of Cheekpoint Pier and St Nicholas Church. Most of these are deemed Medium sensitivity, balancing the familiarity of viewers and their familiarity or appreciation of the landscape, and the values typically associated with visual amenity. At the viewpoint at the top of Minaun Hill, the views are panoramic and elevated, well providing for the visual amenity value 'Provision of elevated panoramic views' with any association with a 'sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity', reduced by the communications infrastructure within the immediate surrounds. Viewpoint 7, located at the rocky outcrop peak of Minaun Hill, is deemed High sensitivity, mainly due to the scale and amenity of the view. It should be noted that the direction of the Site is 180 degrees to the primary source of amenity, which looks out over the Suir / Barrow estuary and tree-lined fields, shown below:

Figure 13-8: View from Minaun Hill, towards Wexford and the coast over the Suir.

In contrast, Viewpoint 5 is located along the waterline of the Suir. This reduces the association with 'provision of elevated panoramic views' but increases the 'sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity'. Although it is not to say the Cheekpoint Walk is entirely 'remote and tranquil', given the proximity to the other, industrial land uses on the north of the river, it is primarily located within vegetated surrounds, with views of a wide expanse of water; as such, the slightly more natural setting of Cheekpoint Walk is deemed High-Medium. Finally, VP6 is located halfway down the northern face of Minaun Hill, within Deerpark Recreation Area, also deemed High-medium sensitivity due to the sense of separation from these more intensive land uses and broader views.

On the basis of the site-specific factors outlined above and in accordance with the general visual receptor sensitivity considerations contained in the methodology Section 13.2.5, visual receptor sensitivity judgments are provided for each representative viewpoint in the table below in Section 13.6.7 below.

13.5.4 Construction Stage Landscape Impacts

During the Construction Phase, there will be a higher intensity of activity at the Site than during the operational phase. The proposed works to prepare for the construction of the new quay and land reclamation will result in a substantial modification of the prevailing landform, altering a 250m section of shoreline and riverbed, widening up to 80m further into the river than the existing quay, with land reclamation of approximately 1.2ha. Therefore, it will have a noticeable physical impact on the current shoreline, which will be permanent and irreversible.

Construction of the extension works is expected to take around 18 - 24 months to complete and will involve demolition works, earth-moving machinery and mobile cranes. Other features that are a new addition to this northern section of the port will be the buildings associated with the application. Up to 3-storeys high, the construction stage will see these rise from the otherwise low-profile land uses in the northern end of the quay, with associated cranes, scaffolding, material delivery and intensity of site activity to construct each building.

Ancillary construction stage features will also include storage areas, temporary car parking and welfare facilities for workers (see Section 3.4 for a full technical description of construction-related works). All of these construction-stage features and activities will add significantly to the intensity and scale of activities associated with the existing port facility and will likely reduce the overall sense of scenic and recreational value associated with the river corridor. However, these construction stage works and associated impacts will be 'short-term' in duration (1-7 years in accordance with EPA definitions), which substantially reduces the level of significance. They will also take place in the context of a busy port facility where almost constant activity occurs.

Construction stage impacts on the biodiversity enhancement area are the potential disturbance of the existing groundcover within the proposed planting areas and the planting of saplings. The small-scale earthworks and foundation works required to establish the ponds and biodiversity structures will result in discrete areas of character change; however, they will not influence the wider context.

All of these aspects of the construction phases will detract from the prevailing coastal character in the immediate surroundings of the Proposed Development.

Whilst the physical construction stage works will have a notable impact on the landscape in the immediate context of the Proposed Development, they are viewed in the context of the busy working port context. Furthermore, construction-related activity and its effect on landscape character will be temporary in duration. For these reasons, the magnitude of landscape impact during the construction stage was deemed to be **High-medium** within and immediately around the Site (ca. 300m), but reducing steadily thereafter with distance and intervening screening and as the construction works become a proportionately smaller component of a broader landscape context.

13.5.5 Operational Stage Landscape Impacts

Once completed, the extended quay will be a geometric platform that will align and mirror the height, form and geometry of the existing quay to the extent that, with sufficient time, both the existing quay and its protection works will appear as if they had been originally constructed as one. Indeed, upon the completion of construction, the extended quay will not appear incongruous in the context of the surrounding port, which comprises a man-made quay, as well as several buildings. The addition of buildings along the water's edge, to the north of the rail crossing, will be a change to the existing land use patterns, where the majority of buildings are clustered to the west, up the steep slopes of the river valley. The nearest buildings along the water's edge are at the southern end of the port, where Target Fertilisers and Belview Bulk Storage Warehouses are stacked along the north-western side of the rail line. The northern end of the port primarily presents as a transitional site, where the larger permanent built form

is clustered on the flat landform to the south or the upper sections on the hill to the north of the site (where the Smartply facility is located. The 500m separation between the proposed buildings and these warehouses, or the elevation difference between the Smartply facility, perched atop the hill above the port, results in the Proposed Development effectively extending the industrial warehouse from 500m north and down to the waterline.

The proposed works represent an intensification and extension of the existing built development in the immediate surroundings, and there will likely be a modest increase in activity and vessel traffic as the new quay extension becomes fully utilised by existing users and those servicing future offshore renewable energy projects. These activities will be set against a more extensive port setting. The nature of these effects will be consistent with normal development and activity at a busy port facility and will not appear as out of the ordinary.

As a result of the physical and operational landscape impacts described above, the Proposed Development will substantially alter the existing landscape character of the tapered northern end of the port land use and immediate area. It will represent a marked increase in the intensity and scale of built development in the highly modified but transitional landscape. The transition between the port land use and the rural landscapes of Drumdowney Upper is loosely located at Luffany Stream and the small valley immediately to the north of the Site.

Operational stage impacts on the biodiversity enhancement area is limited to the gradual change in land cover through the establishment of the planting areas, and the periodic presence of workers undertaking maintenance work, including weeding and replanting of failed planting stock.

The Proposed Development will change the overriding landscape character of the immediate shoreline from a transitional port / industrial periphery to one clearly defined and occupied by industry and major transport infrastructure. However, the Proposed Development will also likely provide a more defined edge and a sense of organisation / utility to this landscape, which is currently characterised by an array of sporadically evolved land uses. The location of the built form to the north of the quay and the reclaimed land will bracket the wider quay between the Proposed Development and the Belview Bulk Storage Warehouses at the southern extent. It should also be noted that the Proposed Development will be in line with current and future trends for industrial and infrastructure development, which is supported by the zoning objectives of the Local Area Plan for this area. In terms of effects on the 'landscape image' of the Belview / Waterford Port environs, this will not represent an unexpected, inappropriate or incongruous development but rather an intensification and extension of the existing land uses. While this will have a corresponding increase in the influence that the more intensive port and industrial land uses have on the wider landscape, it will be well-contained and reflect natural boundaries within the existing landscape patterns.

For the reasons outlined above, it was considered that the Proposed Development will give rise to physical landscape impacts and landscape character impacts of a Medium magnitude within the Site and its immediate surroundings (<300m). Effects on landscape character will dissipate quickly to Medium and Low beyond the immediate Site surrounds as the setting of the Proposed Development will be more evident, and the Proposed Development will be absorbed into the port context, contained to the north by the Luffany Stream valley and corridor.

With reference to the significance matrix Table 13-4 above, the **Medium** landscape sensitivity judgement attributed to the study area, coupled with a **Medium** magnitude of landscape impact in the immediate vicinity (<300m) of the Proposed Development, was considered to result in an overall significance of no greater than **Moderate**, with the remainder of the 5km radius study area likely to experience **Slight** or **Imperceptible** landscape impacts.

13.5.6 Magnitude of Visual Effects – Operational Stage

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints was aided by photomontages of the Proposed Development. Photomontages are a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view, utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the Proposed Development, which has been geo-referenced to allow accurate placement and scale. For each viewpoint, the following images have been produced

- Existing view;
- Outline view;
- Montage View; and,
- Nighttime Montage View (VP4 sample only).

Table 13-7: Description and Assessment of Effects on Viewpoints

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
VP1	**Great Island at Barrow Bridge** – This is a mixed view with some scenic amenity contrasting with industrial characteristics of the rail line and wider land uses. The viewpoint is located on the northeast of the Barrow River in the wider study area. Slight elevation is provided over the confluence of the Barrow and Suir Rivers by the railway bridge embankment, allowing views up the Suir to O'Brien Cement. The viewpoint is primarily representative of local residences, with a small number of regular viewers to/from the Great Island Power Station.	**Medium**	Due to intervening landform and vegetation, the Proposed Development will not be visible from this location. Therefore, the magnitude of visual impact will be **Negligible**	**Imperceptible / Neutral / Long Term**
VP2	**Local Road northwest of Site at Drumdowney Upper (Kilkenny Scenic Designation 22**): This view is representative of Ferrybank/Kilkenny Scenic Designation 22, described as 'Views over the confluence of the Rivers Suir and Barrow at Snow Hill'. The view doesn't have clear visual access to the waterways, and most of the road corridor is highly screened by vegetation. The viewpoint is oriented to the south, to the existing built-up areas of Belview Port, particularly the Smartply stack. Although the cranes of the existing port are visible from this location, the main built form is not. The landform drops away in the foreground, with a small, brushy valley lined in woodland. The valley landform opens towards the river Suir, which is screened by a line of trees. Faithlegg can be seen in the distance over a dense blanket of vegetation**.**	**Medium**	The Proposed Development will be partially screened by the existing vegetation at the end of the valley. This vegetation will screen the lower sections of the Proposed Development, while the roofline of the buildings will be seen over and through the treetops. Viewed in the context of the existing SmartPly Site and the port cranes, the Proposed Development will be clearly associated with the port. However, the linear nature of the Proposed Development along the shoreline will extend the industrial land use across the view, dividing the open pastoral areas near the viewer from the wider, higher amenity landscapes in Cheekpoint and Faithlegg on the opposite side of the river. Fragmenting the land uses and character within the view. However, as this will occur across a limited portion of the view, the impact will be ameliorated by context and distance to **Medium-Low**	**Moderate-slight / Negative / Long-term**
VP3	**Local Road north of Site at Drumdowney Upper (Kilkenny Scenic Designation 22):** This viewpoint is located c. 500m to the southeast of VP2, along the same scenic designation 22. The difference is that this location does feature views to the surface of the Suir	**Medium**	As above, much of the Proposed Development will be screened by intervening vegetation. From this angle, only the administration building on the northern side of the rail line will be clearly visible. While this screens a part of the visible river corridor, it will be in the context	**Moderate-slight / Negative / Long-term**

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
	river, through gaps in the otherwise highly screened road corridor. The views to the river are filtered through the cranes of the existing port are visible from this location, and as at VP2, the SmartPly site is the most prominent built form, on the crest of the opposite hill. The landform drops away in the foreground to Luffany Stream valley, which is lined with woodland. As above, the distant landscape is contained by the opposite side of the Suir valley, with the border of Faithlegg golf course in the distance.		of the existing port and the longer distance views are retained. While Proposed Development adds a small increase in intensity and enclosure to the view, at no point does it obscure or break the skyline. This serves to reduce the impact at this location as it allows visual connection to the wider landscape to be maintained around the built form. On balance of the limited visibility and proximity, the magnitude of impact is deemed **Medium-Low**.	
VP4	**Cheekpoint Pier:** The view is located on newly upgraded Cheekpoint Pier, with both occupational and recreational/ residential boats in the surrounding context. In the wider context, a cluster of residential properties can be seen at Cheekpoint Pier village. Beyond the pier, long-distance views of the rolling agricultural landscape at Drumdowney Upper and chimney stacks associated with Belview Port are available across the River Suir. The largest and most visible of these is the SmartPly site, located slightly above the river corridor. The existing port is generally screened by landform and vegetation along the Co. Waterford side of the river, with the site itself screened by vegetation on the distant, northern (Co. Kilkenny) riverbank.	**Medium**	The Proposed Development will be seen at a considerable distance from the northern end of the Cheekpoint peninsula. Located at the bend in the River Suir and set against the lower slopes of the rolling context of the port, the Proposed Development will be readily absorbed into the view, with no influence on the viewpoint and higher amenity context to the north and south of the river. Although the replacement of the otherwise vegetated context with built form adds intensity to the wider context, this is contained in the background of the view, adjacent to complementary land uses. Therefore, the impact is deemed **Low.**	**Moderate-slight / Negative / Long Term**
VP4 (Night-time)	**Cheekpoint Pier (nighttime):** This viewpoint was captured in the same location during evening hours when the Suir estuary and surrounding hills remain discernible and the lighting context within the Suir corridor has become apparent. It is still at a time when visual amenity is a consideration, before full darkness. This is not an area that is protected or, indeed, valued for dark skies amenity. There are numerous domestic and commercial sources of light flanking the estuary in the fore-to-middle ground, but the key consideration in	**Medium**	The proposed lighting will add to the intensity of lighting around the port and quay area near the waterside. It will contribute a series of direct light source spotlights as well as greater illumination of the port facility components and quay below. However, the key consideration is that the proposed lighting occurs in an area of existing industrial lighting where it contributes to increased intensity of lighting but without materially changing the character of evening views. It does not	**Moderate-slight / Negative / Long Term**

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
	the distance / direction of the site is the industrial facility on the slopes above the Port of Waterford and also closer to the existing quay at the waterside. Interestingly, the plume from the stack within the industrial site is softly lit by the lighting within the site below. There are also large areas of farmland and woodland flanking the estuary where there are no permanent light sources.		introduce lighting into a heretofore dark portion of the landscape that contains the Suir corridor. For the reasons outlined above, the magnitude of visual impact from the proposed lighting is deemed to be **Low**.	
VP5	**Local river walk southeast of site at Cheekpoint:** This is an attractive rural riverside view. Receptors are primarily recreational users of the river walk and those that would reasonably be expected to visit the location for the views associated. The foreground of the view comprises grassland scrub within the river floodplain with a series of channels and scrapes that lead towards the River Suir, lined on its north by dense riparian woodland. To the right, beyond the river the undulating pastoral landscape and elevated plateau at Drumdowney Upper are available from this location. To the left of the view the port at Belview Port is visible, with chimneys associated with the Port and adjacent infrastructure visible against the skyline. This is a pleasant riverside view with a number of visible detractors. From this location, the existing port development is presented in two clusters, one located to the southwest along the river corridor, and the other located to the west, inland and above the river corridor on the rolling landform. The space between, although occupied by storage areas and access routes, is generally screened by vegetation.	**High-medium**	The Proposed Development will be clearly visible along the waterline on the opposite side of the river. This extends and increases the influence that the port and industrial land uses have on the view, visually connecting the two clusters of existing, visible development. However, while the Proposed Development consolidates the built development on the far side of the Suir, it is well separated from the nearest section of the opposite bank to the viewer, at Drumdowney Upper/Snow Hill. The Site is located to the south of Luffany Stream and the small valley through which Luffany Stream flows. This provides a natural demarcation of the land use differences to the north and south of the stream, at Belview versus Drumdowney Upper/Snow Hill. While the Proposed Development adds intensity to the land use, the extent of the view occupied by similar developments is not markedly changed. Therefore, the magnitude of impact is deemed **Medium-Low**.	**Slight / Negative / Long Term**
VP6	**Deer Park Forrest Recreational Area at Faithlegg** – This is an expansive, elevated view across the landscape. In the foreground of the view, the Forest canopy is visible, sloping northwards down to the River	**High-medium**	Due to the elevated viewpoint, the development is clearly visible from this location. There is a degree of intensification as a result of the development, with the extension of built form to much of the visible shoreline	**Moderate / Negative / Long Term**

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
	Suir. Beyond the river, the immediate view is dominated by infrastructure and industry associated with Belview Port. Long-distance views across the flat to the gently undulating landscape of Kilkenny are available. A number of other detractors are visible across the landscape, including factories and associated infrastructure at Glanbia Ingredients Ireland**.**		opposite the viewpoint. The Site is well separated from the viewer's immediate context and does not detract from the natural amenity experienced by those walking over Deer Park, as views of different land uses are an expected and familiar aspect of the Suir/Waterford context. The development is clearly settled within the existing land use context, in keeping with the heavily industrialised Belview Port. However, it does result in a broad proportion of the visible river corridor being lined with buildings. There is a visual balance in the layout of buildings at either end of the pier, while the alignment with the Luffany Stream and the lower landform demarcate a clear boundary between land uses. This demarcation reduces ambiguity as to the extent of higher intensity land use in the wider context. Therefore, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed **Medium-Low.**	
VP7	**Minaun Hill** - This is one of the most scenic views in the study area, as depicted in the sensitivity discussion. However, the Site is located 180 degrees from the section of the view with the highest amenity, looking marginally uphill to the denser vegetation and communications infrastructure. This is primarily an illustrative view to indicate the potential visibility to the siteward side of the hill from the primary 'Viewing Point' of the short walk to the hill and out across the wider coastline.	**High**	The Proposed Development will be entirely screened by vegetation and landform from this location; as such, the magnitude of impact is deemed **Negligible**	**Imperceptible / Neutral / Long Term**
VP8	**The Fairways at Faithlegg**: This is a pleasant rural view, representing the local community along the sloping River Valley between Faithlegg and Minaun Hill. The view is open across a field where the distant hedgerow partially screens the port. There is a mix of land uses across the view but main source of land use intensity in the immediate surrounds are the sports	**Medium-low**	The Proposed Development will be highly screened by vegetation from this location, and while filtered views may be glimpsed, these will not materially impact the view or setting. As such, the magnitude of impact is deemed **Negligible**.	**Imperceptible / Neutral / Long Term**

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
	grounds and visitors to Faithlegg, which has a right of way to the southwest of the viewpoint, adding a degree of activity and traffic to the viewer context**.**			
VP9	**Faithlegg Golf Course**: Receptors are primarily recreational users of the golf course and those who would reasonably be expected to visit the location for the views associated. The view is dominated by the well-managed grassed golf course with scattered mature trees and shrubs. In the centre of the view, some residential properties are visible. Above the residential roofline, warehousing, the infrastructure and chimneys associated with Belview Port are visible detractors.	**Medium**	From this location, the Proposed Development will be partially visible along the distant treeline, which defines the Golf Course extent. The Proposed Development will be secondary in both scale and proximity to the more prominent industrial features at Belview Port. The Proposed Development extends the anthropocentric working landscape associated with Belview Port to the north, set against the varied side of Drumdowney Upper/Snow Hill. The sharp, rectangular form of the buildings will contrast with the surrounding organic and verdant tones and textures of the established trees in the foreground. However, there is perceptual separation from the viewer and screening of much of the Proposed Development through its location on the far side of the River Suir. Additionally, the location below the horizon serves to further reduce the prominence of the Proposed Development. As a result, the visual impact is deemed **Low.**	**Slight / Negative / Long Term**
VP10	**St Nicholas Church, Faithlegg**: This viewpoint is located at St Nicholas Church, to the north of Faithlegg Golf Course and associated villages. The elevated cemetery in the surrounds of the church allows long-distance views over the rooflines of the nearby residences and adds a heritage value to the viewpoint. The distance landform of Kilkenny defines the horizon, screened to the northeast by established woodland	**Medium**	Due to the distance, intervening vegetation, landform and built-up elements, the Proposed Development will be only incrementally visible from this location. Although set amongst the wider development surrounding the port, the Proposed Development does not break the skyline or impact the character of the view. Therefore, the magnitude of visual impact will be **Negligible**.	**Imperceptible / Neutral / Long Term**
VP11	**Cheekpoint Road (L4082) at Coolbunna:** This is the Waterford scenic route to the south of the Site, between Waterford and Faithlegg, looping over the Cheekpoint peninsula. The view is a pleasant rural	**Medium**	The Proposed Development will be entirely screened by vegetation and landform from this location; as such, the magnitude of impact is deemed **Negligible**.	**Imperceptible / Neutral / Long Term**

VP No.	Existing View	VP Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude (Pre & Post Mitigation)	Pre-Mitigation Significance / Quality / Duration of Impact
	setting, under some pressure from the surrounding residential areas. The view is enclosed by the roadside stone wall and extensive vegetation typical of the surroundings			

13.5.7 Proposed Mitigation Measures and/or Factors

The main mitigation by avoidance measure employed in this instance is the siting of the Proposed Development in a cohesive manner with the surrounding complementary land uses with similar form and character. The study area also avails of a high degree of screening in the form of landform, vegetative screening, and other intervening built elements. The Proposed Development will be located in a comparatively narrow and enclosed section of the river corridor. The steep-sided hills to the east, west, and north of the Proposed Development will serve to screen much of the study area from view. However, in the instance of Minaun Hill to the southeast, the higher elevation areas will also result in clear views of the Proposed Development and surrounding area. This visibility will serve to clearly associate the Proposed Development with the numerous other development types, including large-scale industrial warehousing and plant.

As an extension of an existing port facility, the Proposed Development will be much less likely to give rise to significant landscape and visual impacts than a new or separate facility. The Proposed Development cannot be readily screened from view, nor is this considered necessary in the context of an existing working port complex.

The only component of the development which features mitigation measures is the building cladding. The building cladding is designed with a sectioned colour scheme over the different faces of each 'block' of built form to break up the mass of the building. This will be implemented as an integral part of the development as embedded mitigation, so there is no instance where the development will be seen without this mitigation in place. The project features a Biodiversity Enhancement Area (1.82ha) located to the northeast of the pier extension in existing agricultural wet grassland that is bisected by the Luffany Stream. This is not a specific landscape and visual mitigation intervention, but rather for overall biodiversity improvement.

The siting and design of the proposed works are inherent to the appraisal of landscape / seascape and visual impacts herein and thus, the predicted impacts (pre-mitigation) are the same as residual impacts (post-mitigation) in this instance.

13.5.8 Cumulative Effects

In terms of cumulative effects, these have been predicted to be no more than Low in the immediate surroundings of the Proposed Development, along V22 in Co. Kilkenny, reducing to Low-negligible and Negligible in the wider landscape, limited to locations where the Proposed Development will be visible in combination with the wider Belview / Waterford Port Context. This results in a final significance of no more than Slight at select locations along V22, while the majority of views presented in this assessment would experience a final significance of Slight-imperceptible or Imperceptible.

Viewpoints where the warehousing development will be screened and presented as outlined only are VP3, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

13.6 Interactions with Other Environmental Attributes

LVIA interacts with the following environmental attributes:

- Chapter 5 (Population and Human Health). The Proposed Development and resulting changes to the surrounding visual amenities have the potential to affect human health through a reduction in quality of life. However, due to the development's nature as an extension of an existing industrial complex and the high degree of screening already provided by the surrounding landscape, it was not considered to have a significant effect on human health through a reduction in quality of life; and,
- Chapter 7 (Soils and Geology). The modification of local geomorphology and topology through the extraction of the riverbed and bedrock on land and within the Lower Suir

Estuary will potentially impact the visual and landscape character of the area. Coastal erosion may affect scenic natural landscapes in the area. The effects on landscape were determined to have no significant effect.

13.7 Indirect Effects

Indirect effects may arise from increased industrialisation of the surrounding landscape, the visual component of which may have an effect on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. In the normal course of the planning process, each and every new proposal will be assessed on its own merits and, if appropriate, will be subject to a site-specific visual impact assessment.

13.8 Residual Effects

Based on the landscape and visual impact judgments provided throughout this chapter, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant residual effects. Instead, residual landscape effects will not exceed 'Moderate' significance, even in the immediate context of the Proposed Development, and residual visual effects will not exceed 'Moderate' significance. In the context of the Proposed Development, it was considered that these moderate-level residual effects represent an acceptable impact on the receiving landscape.

13.9 Monitoring

There will be no relevant construction or operational stage monitoring measures required.

13.10 Reinstatement

Not applicable.

13.11 Difficulties Encountered in Compiling This Information

There were no difficulties encountered while compiling this information.

REFERENCES

[1] Landscape Institute and IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment," Routledge , 2013.

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[3] Landscape Institute, *Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment,* Landscape Institute, 2019.

[4] Kilkenny County Council, "Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027," Kilkenny County Council, 2023.

[5] Waterford City and County Council, "Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022–2028," Waterford CC, Waterford, 2022.

[6] Wexford County Council, "Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028," Wexford CC, Wexford, 2022.

[7] KCC, "Proposed Variation No.6 to the Kilkenny CCDP 2021 - 2027: Ferrybank Belview Framework Plan," 18 07 2025. [Online]. Available: https://consult.kilkenny.ie/en/consultation/proposed-variation-no6-kilkenny-ccdp-2021-2027-ferrybank-belview-framework-plan. [Accessed 2025].