
Chapter 14

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

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14. Landscape and Visual Impact

14.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) assesses the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the landscape and visual resource of the study area. It identifies mitigation and compensation measures that will be implemented to prevent, reduce, or offset potential negative landscape and visual effects or enhance potential beneficial effects, where possible. This chapter sets out the methodology used to undertake the assessment (Section 14.3), describes the existing environment (Section 14.4), proposes mitigation and monitoring measures (Section 14.5), examines the predicted impacts of the proposed development (Section 14.6), and identifies residual effects and interactions (Sections 14.7, and Section 14.8). This chapter should be read in conjunction with the following Chapters, and their appendices, which present related impacts arising from the proposed development.

- Chapter 4: Description of the Proposed Development,
- Chapter 6: Population and Human Health
- Chapter 7: Biodiversity
- Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 16: Material Assets and Land: Agricultural properties
- Chapter 17: Material Assets and Land: Non-Agricultural properties

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (herein referred to as LVIA) considers how:

- Landscape effects associated with the proposed development relate to changes to the fabric, character, and quality of the landscape resource and how it is experienced.
- Visual effects relate closely to landscape effects, but concern changes in existing views.

The LVIA is supported by the following documents:

- Volume 3
 - Drawings 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1403 – 1410 - Zone of Theoretical Visibility
 - Drawing 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1401 - Landscape Character Areas and Designated Views
 - Drawing 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1402 - Scenic Amenity
 - Drawings 60701883-ACM-ELS-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001 – 0031 - Landscape Mitigations Plans,
- Volume 4
 - Appendix 14.1 Booklet of Photomontages
 - Drawings 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1420 – 1421 – Photomontage Viewpoints

14.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

14.2.1 European

14.2.1.1 The European Landscape Convention (2000)

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention (Treaty No. 176), as amended, (Ref. 1) provides guidelines for managing landscapes/ landscapes. The Convention is not an EU Directive. Countries that sign and ratify the Convention make a commitment to upholding the principles it contains within the context of their own domestic legal and policy frameworks. The convention was ratified by Ireland in March 2002 and came into effect in Ireland in 2004. The European Landscape Convention requires 'landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on Landscape'.

14.2.2 National

14.2.2.1 National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025

The 'National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025' (NLS) (Ref. 2) was launched in May 2015 and promotes the sustainable protection, management, and planning for the landscape. The NLS states that:

"The National Landscape Strategy will be used to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change. It will provide a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions". It also states that "The Strategy sets out Ireland's high-level objectives and actions with regard to landscape. It also positions landscape in the context of existing Irish and European strategies, policies and objectives, and outlines methods of ensuring co-operation at a sectoral and at a European level by the State".

14.2.3 Local

14.2.3.1 County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 (CDP 2024-2030)

The County Donegal Development 2024-2030 (Ref. 12) was adopted by the Donegal County Council in May 2024. This is the principal land use planning strategy document for County Donegal and sets out a vision for the sustainable future development of the County, along with objectives and policies designed to achieve this vision, to 2030 and beyond.

14.2.3.2 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Area Plan 2024-2030

The Ballybofey/Stranorlar Area Plan 2024-2030 (Ref. 13) is contained within the CDP 2024 and supersedes the Ballybofey/Stranorlar part of the Seven Strategic Towns LAP 2018-2024. The purpose of the Area Plan is to provide a framework for the sustainable development of Ballybofey/Stranorlar through land use zoning and infrastructure provision. It has a specific focus on strengthening the town's economic role, supporting urban regeneration and delivering community infrastructure and amenity networks including walking and cycling connections.

14.3 Methodology

14.3.1 Guidelines

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken in the context of the Environmental Impact Assessment process to identify, predict and evaluate the likely significant effects of the proposed development on landscape character and visual amenity.

The LVIA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of:

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) (2020) – PE-ENV-01101: Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for Specified Infrastructure Projects – Overarching Technical Document; and
- TII (2020) – PE-ENV-01102: LCA and LVIA for Specified Infrastructure Projects – Standard.
- European Commission (2017) Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
- Environmental Protection Agency (2022) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in EIARs;
- Government of Ireland (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)
- Relevant statutory planning policy and development plans.

The methodology follows the structured approach set out in TII PE-ENV-01101 and is consistent with established good practice in landscape and visual assessment.

14.3.2 General Assessment Process

In accordance with TII guidance, the LVIA has been undertaken in the following stages:

1. Definition of study area;
2. Establishment of the baseline environment, including landscape character and visual resources;
3. Identification of landscape and visual receptors;
4. Assessment of receptor sensitivity, informed by landscape value and susceptibility to change;
5. Assessment of magnitude of effect;
6. Determination of significance of effect;
7. Identification of mitigation measures;
8. Assessment of residual effects;
9. Consideration of cumulative effects.

The significance of landscape and visual effects is determined through professional judgement based on the relationship between receptor sensitivity and magnitude of change, consistent with the approach set out in TII guidance and GLVIA3.

14.3.3 Scope

14.3.3.1 Study Area

The study area for the LVIA has been defined through consideration of the nature, scale and potential visibility of the proposed development.

The proposed development comprises a linear greenway corridor generally following an existing transport corridor and valley landscape, with limited vertical infrastructure. As such, landscape and visual effects are expected to be primarily experienced within the immediate landscape setting.

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been prepared to assist in identifying the potential extent of visibility of the proposed development (refer to EIAR, Volume 3, 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1403 – 1410 – Zone of Theoretical Visibility).

The ZTV illustrates bare-earth theoretical visibility and does not account for screening provided by vegetation, hedgerows, woodland or buildings. Site-based verification was therefore undertaken to confirm actual visibility and the influence of intervening screening. Following which a study area of 3km from the proposed development has been adopted.

14.3.3.2 Effects Scoped Out

Effects arising from the decommissioning phase of the proposed development are considered to be of a similar nature and duration to those arising from the construction process and have therefore not been considered separately in this report. Where this assessment refers to potential construction effects, these are also representative of predicted decommissioning effects. The assessment acknowledges that landscape and visual effects change over time as the existing landscape external to the proposed development evolves and proposed planting establishes and matures.

14.3.3.3 Establishment of the Receiving Environment

A baseline study, in order to establish the existing conditions of the landscape and visual resources of the study area, has been undertaken through a combination of desk-based research and site appraisals by Landscape Architects in April 2025. Desk-based research has involved a review of mapping and aerial photography, relevant planning and policy documents, the relevant Landscape Character Assessments and other relevant documents and publications.

14.3.3.4 Appreciation of the Proposed Development

In order to be able to accurately assess the full extent of likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity, it is essential to develop a thorough and detailed knowledge of the proposed development. This includes a comprehensive understanding of its location, nature, and scale, and is achieved through a review of detailed descriptions of the proposed development, drawings, and an on-site appraisal.

The landscape and visual impact assessment has considered all elements of the proposed development.

14.3.4 Methodology for Assessment of Landscape Effects

Landscape effects describe the impact on the fabric or structure of a landscape or landscape character.

14.3.1.1 Baseline Landscape Character

Landscape character is described in terms of:

- Landform and topography;
- Land cover and vegetation structure;
- Settlement pattern;
- Infrastructure;
- Cultural and historic influences;
- Perceptual qualities (e.g. openness, enclosure, tranquillity).

14.3.1.2 Landscape Receptors

Landscape receptors considered include:

- Landscape Character Areas;
- Designated landscapes;
- Scenic routes and protected views;

- Key landscape elements and features.

14.3.1.3 Landscape Value and Susceptibility

Landscape value describes the relative importance of a landscape and may derive from a variety of factors including landscape quality, scenic attractiveness, rarity, cultural associations, and presence of statutory or local landscape designations.

Landscape susceptibility reflects the ability of a landscape to accommodate the proposed development without undue loss of key characteristics.

14.3.1.4 Landscape Significance and Sensitivity

“In general, significance and sensitivity is applied to landscapes and aspects of the landscape that are important to defining and maintaining the character of landscape areas identified in the LCA, as well as to designated and notable features of the landscape” (PE-ENV-01101).

Landscape significance and sensitivity reflects:

- Landscape value (including designations and scenic status);
- Quality and condition;
- Character robustness;
- Capacity to accommodate change.

Landscape significance and sensitivity of the landscape receptor, with reference to the criteria set out in Table 14-1 below.

Table 14-1 - Rating of Landscape Significance / Sensitivity

Landscape Significance and Sensitivity	Description of Baseline Landscape Significance/Sensitivity Criteria
Very High	A landscape protected by an international or national designation. Landscape Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites & Geoparks. A landscape widely acknowledged for its distinctive features and the quality and value of its elements and edge condition. A landscape with distinctive character and very susceptible to change. Distinctive/unique land uses of widely acknowledged landscape quality. For example: • Historical townscape and urban set pieces; • Nationally important tourism, cultural, recreational & amenity landscapes, open spaces and parklands; • Protected coastal landscapes/seascapes; • Dark sky reserve landscapes. • Tranquil or remote landscapes. • Absence of negative elements.
High	A landscape widely acknowledged as containing elements of national importance. A landscape containing nationally important (and in some cases regionally important) historical, ecological and socio-cultural features. A landscape acknowledged for its high quality and value. A landscape having the capacity to accommodate change to a certain degree. For example: • Elements critical to maintaining the landscape/township character of high-rated areas • Community, sports, and recreational landscapes which cannot be replaced locally. • Notable high value landscape features that could not be replaced. • Landscape setting to high value cultural heritage features. • May have some negative elements, but otherwise contains highly rated landscape elements.

**Landscape
Significance
and
Sensitivity**

Description of Baseline Landscape Significance/Sensitivity Criteria

Medium	A landscape that exhibits positive character. A landscape that is locally important, but that might contain some regionally important elements. A landscape of some quality and value but with some negative conditions. A landscape whose character, land use pattern, and scale would have the capacity to accommodate change. For example: • Elements important to but critical for maintaining the landscape/ townscape character of an area. • Commonplace but not characteristic elements with recognisable structure and characteristic patterns with some sense of place. • Distinctive / unique land uses of some acknowledged landscape quality. • Landscapes with some detracting features present. • Sporting and recreational landscapes which could be replaced locally. • Ecological or cultural landscapes or interest. • Notable landscape elements that could be replaced.
Low	A landscape of local importance but with some degraded elements or conditions. A landscape where lack of management/intervention is evident. A landscape where change is unlikely to be detrimental, for example: • Elements not important to maintaining the landscape/ townscape character of an area. • Land uses without acknowledged landscape quality. • Industrial/post-industrial landscapes with little cultural heritage antiquity Marginal land on urban fringe / some peri-urban landscapes/areas of dereliction with low aesthetics value and few elements of interest • Sporting and recreational landscapes where they can be easily replaced locally..
Very Low	A degraded landscape. Infrastructural landscapes of no cultural heritage antiquity, including major transport corridors. Landscape where negative elements dominate the overall character. Brownfield sites with no associations of note. A landscape where change is likely to be positive.

14.3.1.5 Magnitude of Landscape Effects

The magnitude of effect depends on the nature, scale, duration, and reversibility of the particular change that is envisaged, the location in which it is proposed, and the overall effect on a particular landscape. In accordance with TII guidance, magnitude is informed by consideration of the following factors:

- The extent of existing landscape elements that will be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the character of the landscape.
- The degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered either by removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones.
- Whether the change effects the key characteristics of the landscape, which are integral to its distinctive character.
- The geographic area over which the landscape effects will be felt (within the Site itself; the immediate setting of the Site; at the scale of the landscape type or character area; on a larger scale influencing several landscape types or character areas); and
- The duration of the effects (short term, medium term or long term) and the reversibility of the effect (whether it is permanent, temporary or partially reversible).

Landscape effects may be direct or indirect. Direct effects arise from physical alteration of the landscape within or immediately adjacent to the Site. Indirect effects occur as a consequence of the development and may arise at a distance from the Site or over time, including effects resulting from associated activities or changes in landscape use or perception.

In assessing magnitude, the principal components of the proposed development considered include:

- Horizontal alignment;
- Vertical alignment;
- Extent and location of cut and fill;
- Height and distribution of junctions and structures;
- Extent and scope of proposed illumination;
- Extent and location of construction compounds;
- Details for bridges, surface water attenuation; and,
- Proposed landscape and Ecological treatments.

The indicative criteria applied to determine the magnitude of landscape effects are set out in Table 14-2 below. These are indicative and provide an example of considerations, supported and modified by explanative text in the LVIA.

Table 14-2 - Indicative Criteria for Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Magnitude	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	Major alteration to, or complete loss of, key landscape or visual characteristics or components of the baseline condition. Effects likely to be experienced at a very large scale, considered permanent and irreversible.
High	Notable or longer-term change to a widespread area or view or a notable change in continuous or key landscape or visual characteristics or components.
Medium	Moderate or longer-term change over a restricted area or view or a moderate change in key landscape or visual characteristics or components.
Low	Minor short or medium-term change over a restricted area or view or a minor change in key landscape characteristics or components.
Very Low	Imperceptible change in key landscape or visual characteristics or components.

14.3.5 Methodology for Assessment of Visual Effects

Visual effects are determined by the extent of visibility and the nature of the visibility (i.e., how a development is seen within the landscape); for example, whether it appears integrated and balanced within the visual composition of a view or whether it creates a focal point.

Negative visual effects may occur through the intrusion of new elements into established views, which are out of keeping with the existing structure, scale and composition of the view. Visual effects may also be beneficial, where an attractive focus is created in a previously unremarkable view, or the influence of previously detracting features is reduced. The significance of effects will vary, depending on the nature and degree of change experienced and the perceived value and composition of the existing view.

14.3.5.1 Viewpoint Selection

The selection of representative viewpoints for this LVIA has been carried out in accordance with current best practice guidance, including:

- TI Guidelines for environmental assessments of transport projects; and

- Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (TGN 06/19) Visual Representation of Development Proposals, which provides guidance on the selection, preparation and presentation of visualisations for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

It is not feasible to capture every potential viewpoint across the study area. Instead, viewpoints have been selected to be representative of typical visibility at varying distances and landscape contexts. These viewpoints provide a robust basis for assessing potential residual visual effects.

The selection process involved:

- Desktop and site-based assessment, supported by Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping, to identify areas from which the proposed development may be visible.
- Identification of representative viewpoints showing typical open or intermittent views across the local landscape that are likely to be frequently experienced by a range of visual receptors.
- Selection of key viewpoints from locations of high scenic amenity or strategic importance, such as main settlements, transport corridors, and valued recreational routes.

A total of 17 representative viewpoints have been selected for visualisation purposes. The visualisations comprise a combination of Type 1 baseline photography, Type 3 photowire and photomontage visualisations, prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals and relevant Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance.

The visualisations include:

- Type 1 Baseline Photography – high-quality photographs of the existing view, used where the Proposed Development would not be visible or where no discernible visual change would occur.
- Type 3 Photowire and Photomontage Visualisations – scale-verifiable wireframe and visualisations to represent the appearance, context, form and extent of development superimposed onto baseline photography.

All visualisations have been prepared from viewpoint locations and are designed to be both geometrically accurate and capable of verification. The visualisation type selected for each viewpoint reflects the level of visibility anticipated and the purpose of the assessment.

14.3.5.2 Visual Receptors

For there to be a visual impact, there is the need for a viewer. Views experienced from locations such as settlements, recognised routes and popular vantage points used by the public have been included in the assessment.

Visual receptors include:

- Residents;
- Recreational users (walkers, cyclists);
- Road users;
- Visitors to scenic routes and amenity areas;
- Users of public rights of way.

14.3.5.3 Visual Significance and Sensitivity

The significance and sensitivity of visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is a function of:

- the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at a particular location; and

- the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and visual amenity they experience at particular locations.

For example, residents in their home, walkers whose interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or a particular view, or visitors at an attraction where views are an important part of the experience often indicate a higher level of susceptibility. Whereas receptors occupied in outdoor sport, where views are not important, or at their place of work, are often considered less susceptible to change. Sensitivity to change considers the nature of the receptor; for example, a person occupying a residential dwelling is generally more sensitive to change than someone working in a factory unit. The importance of the view experienced by the receptor also contributes to an understanding of the susceptibility of the visual receptor to change as well as the value attached to the view.

In compliance with TII - PE-ENV-01101 (Table 6) the following criteria, as set out in Table 14-3, have been referred to in determining the significance of the view and the sensitivity of visual receptors.

Where there are multiple receptors, the most sensitive receptors will be considered in the assessment of the significance of visual effect.

Table 14-3 - Rating of Visual Significance / Sensitivity

Rating of Visual Significance / Sensitivity	Description of Baseline Visual Significance/Sensitivity Criteria
Very High	Designated views, viewpoints, and vistas. Areas containing protected views as outlined in Development Plans or landscape policies. Very highly aesthetic views and vistas, with lack of visual clutter and absence of traffic and other elements which may cause visual degradation. Night-time views within dark sky reserves.
High	Viewers with a proprietary interest and prolonged viewing opportunities such as local residents and frequent recreational users. Existing high quality views from public open spaces, where viewers are likely to experience the type of change resulting from the proposed scheme as a negative or positive change. Views from high usage public spaces, direct observers (e.g. views from local residential properties, residential care units with direct views to the development). Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. Views to and from local ridges, hills, high-points, buildings of note. Views to and from sites of regional ecological and / or cultural interest. Some visual discordance in streetscape. Traffic movements distracting visually but not predominant.
Medium	Viewers with a moderate interest in their environment such as recreational travellers and less frequent users of recreational facilities. Viewers within a landscape dominated by traffic. Visual condition of the landscape is degraded. Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. Views to and from open spaces, local parks. Views from sports and recreational facilities. Views to and from sites of local ecological and / or cultural interest. Views from general community, schools, institutional buildings, and associated outdoor areas.
Low	Viewers with a passing interest in their surroundings or whose interest is not specifically focused on the landscape.

Rating of Visual Significance / Sensitivity	Description of Baseline Visual Significance/Sensitivity Criteria
	Viewers within an exclusively trafficked landscape (i.e. a major roadway or adjacent to one with no mitigation) Views of unremarkable landscapes from general road network. Views of users of recreational facilities where the purpose of that recreation is not related to the view. Views to and from industrial landscapes of little or no cultural heritage antiquity or aesthetic merit.
Very Low	Areas of dereliction and poor visual quality due to such elements as graffiti, vandalism, derelict and run-down buildings and structures and littering. Views to and from degraded or abandoned urban or peri-urban landscapes or areas of dereliction with very low aesthetics value and little or no elements of interest. Views to brownfield or damaged landscapes with no associations of note. Views dominated by transportation and other infrastructure of no aesthetics merit.

14.3.5.4 Magnitude of Visual Effects

The magnitude of the visual effect resulting from the proposed development at any particular viewpoint or receptor is based on the size or scale of change in the view, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The variables involved are described below:

- The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development.
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape form, scale, mass, line, height, sky lining, back-grounding, visual clues, focal points, colour and texture.
- The nature of the view of the proposed development, in relation to the amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor, distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development and the extent of the area over which the changes will be visible; and
- The duration of the effects (short term, medium term or long-term) and the reversibility of the effect (whether it is permanent, temporary or partially reversible).

In compliance with TII - PE-ENV-01101 (Table 7) the magnitudes of visual effects are classified in Table 14-4. These are indicative and provide an example of considerations, supported and modified by explanatory text in the LVIA.

Table 14-4 - Indicative Criteria Descriptions for Visual Magnitude

Magnitude	Classification criteria
Very High	Major alteration to, or complete loss of, key visual characteristics or components of the baseline condition. Effects likely to be experienced at a very large scale, considered permanent and irreversible.
High	Notable or longer-term change to a widespread area or view or a notable change in continuous or key visual characteristics or components.
Medium	Moderate or longer-term change over a restricted area or view or a moderate change in key visual characteristics or components.
Low	Minor short or medium-term change over a restricted area or view or a minor change in key visual characteristics or components.

Magnitude	Classification criteria
Very Low	Imperceptible change in key visual characteristics or components.

14.3.6 Assessing the Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

The objective of the assessment process is to identify and evaluate the potentially significant effects arising from the proposed development. The assessment will identify the residual effects likely to arise from the finalised design taking into account mitigation measures and change over time. The significance of effects will be assessed by considering the sensitivity of the receptor and the predicted magnitude of effect in relation to the baseline conditions to the definitions set out in Table 14-5.

Table 14-5 - Categories of Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

Significance Category	Description of Effect
Profound	An effect that obliterates sensitive characteristics within the landscape and / or visual environment.
Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the landscape and / or visual environment.
Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the landscape and / or visual environment.
Moderate	An effect that alters the landscape in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the landscape and / or visual environment without affecting its sensitivities.
Not Significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the landscape and/or visual environment but without significant landscape and / or visual consequences.
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant landscape and / or visual consequences.

The significance of the effect is determined by considering the magnitude of the effect against the significance and sensitivity of the receiving environment. The basis for consideration of the significance of effects is shown on Plate 14-1.

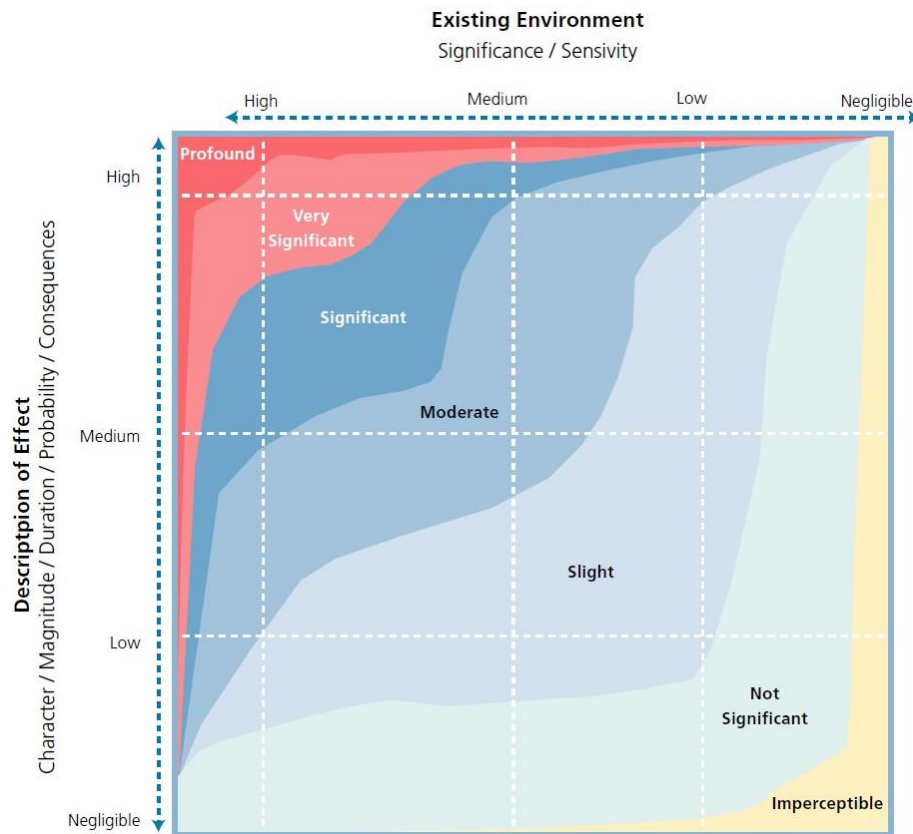


Plate 14-1 - Basis for Consideration of Significance of Effects

14.3.7 Duration and Quality of Effects

Effects will be assessed for all phases of the proposed development. Construction effects are temporary, and short-term effects which occur during the construction / decommission phase only.

Operational / residual effects are those long-term effects, which will occur as a result of the presence or operation of the proposed development.

The duration of effects are classified in Table 14-6.

Table 14-6 - Definition of Duration of Effects

Duration	Description
Temporary	Effects lasting one year or less.
Short Term	Effects lasting one to two years.
Medium Term	Effects lasting two to ten years.
Long Term	Effects lasting ten to sixty years.
Permanent	Effects lasting over sixty years.

The quality of both, landscape, and visual effects, can be Beneficial (Positive), Adverse (Negative) or Neutral according to the definitions set out in Table 14-7.

Table 14-7 - Definition of Quality of Effects

Effect	Effect Description
Neutral	This will neither enhance nor detract from the landscape character or view.
Beneficial (Positive)	This will improve or enhance the landscape character or view.

Effect	Effect Description
Adverse (Negative)	This will reduce the quality of the existing landscape character or view.

14.3.8 Landscape Mitigation

For the purposes of this LVIA, a clear distinction is made between embedded mitigation and additional mitigation measures. Embedded mitigation comprises design measures that are integral to the proposed scheme and have been developed iteratively to avoid or reduce potential landscape and visual effects, such as alignment selection, landform design, and retention of existing vegetation and are described in more detail in Section 14.4.1 Site Location and Project Description. These measures form part of the project description and are taken into account in the assessment of effects. Additional mitigation measures are those identified through the assessment process to further reduce adverse effects where necessary, typically including supplementary planting or screening. This approach is consistent with guidance set out by TII and ensures transparency in distinguishing between design-led impact avoidance and subsequent mitigation.

14.3.9 Residual Effects

Residual effects reflect the incorporation of embedded mitigation measures and landscape proposals. The assessment assumes successful implementation and establishment of mitigation planting in accordance with the Landscape Strategy. Assessment of Operational Effects at Year 15 assumes the landscape proposals have achieved a sense of maturity in the landscape.

14.3.10 Fieldwork

Site surveys carried out by the authors of this chapter in April 2025 identified the potential visibility of the proposed development within the study area and the adjoining wider landscape, taking into account topography, existing screening vegetation and other localised factors. Viewpoint photography to inform the baseline assessment and for preparation of the photomontages was taken on 10/06/2025. Deciduous trees show foliage and therefore does not illustrate the winter season scenario without foliage, i.e., worst-case scenario. However, existing screening provided has been accounted for when determining the magnitude of change of landscape and visual effects.

14.4 Receiving Environment

14.4.1 Project Description

The proposed development includes the construction of a greenway starting in Donegal Town adjacent to Railway Park Road. It will run for approximately 31 kilometres (km), with a further 6.5km of spurs and loops to provide additional connectivity, finishing up at The Base Enterprise Centre in Stranorlar. It passes through the valley of Barnesmore Gap alongside the N15, with spurs that provide connectivity towards Clar, Lough Eske Castle and Harvey's Point Hotel and Biddy's O'Barnes restaurant. There are numerous residential and commercial properties scattered within the landscape along the route. These are clustered mainly along local roads in proximity to the N15, which is a major road connecting these rural areas and is a popular route for both locals and tourists. The greenway is proposed to follow the abandoned Donegal Railway for much of the length.

The character of the landscape is highly variable, strongly influenced by the often dramatic and iconic landform and the bodies of water within the area. The strongest landscape features are Barnesmore Gap, a deep glacial channel that splits the Bluestack Mountains in two, Lough Eske, a large lake surrounded by woodland, and the coastline of Donegal Bay. Portions of the site are visible from directly adjacent areas; however, the undulating nature of the landscape provides screening for many medium to long-range views. The enclosed nature of much of the area, dominated by hedgerows and stone walls, also provides screening from

some roadways and private land. There are also upland areas with sweeping views over the landscape, while Barnesmore Gap provides a distinctive frame for the valley landscape it contains and the immediate areas to the east and west.

14.4.2 Route Selection

A Constraints Study and Route Selection process were undertaken to assess a range of potential alignments for the Barnesmore Gap Greenway. This included consideration of a 'do nothing' and a 'do minimum' scenario as part of the Stage 1 appraisal. The preferred route has been carefully developed to minimise both landscape and visual Effects while respecting the existing character of the area.

14.4.3 Design Proposals

Where practical, the route alignment follows the line of the abandoned railway corridor. This approach has helped reduce the requirement for major earthworks and associated land disturbance by capitalising on an existing linear infrastructure route. The re-use of this corridor also allows the scheme to integrate more readily into the established landscape pattern, with reduced effects on sensitive receptors and local land uses.

Where offline, the alignment has been designed to avoid prominent ridgelines and exposed slopes wherever possible. It generally follows existing field boundaries, minor roads, and natural tree lines in order to reduce landscape fragmentation and visual intrusion. Earthworks have been kept to a minimum through sensitive grading that aligns with natural contours, and where cut-and-fill is necessary, slopes will be rounded and re-vegetated to ensure a smooth visual transition into the surrounding topography.

Where fencing is required for safety or to delineate land ownership, it will be used sparingly and, where possible, set back from the cycle path edge to reduce its prominence. The fencing will be designed to be visually recessive, timber post and rail or timber with stock proof wire. In many locations, the route avoids the need for fencing altogether, further supporting a low visual impact approach. (Refer to Fencing Drawings 60701883-ACM-HFE-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-HG-0001 -0031 in Volume 3 of this EIAR)

Infrastructure elements such as signage and rest areas adopt a low-key design aesthetic using natural materials such as timber, stone, and dark-coloured steel. This will help ensure that these elements integrate with the local landscape character and do not introduce discordant visual features.

Lighting has been limited to the urban areas. In sensitive rural areas, lighting will be avoided to reduce night-time visual disturbance.

14.4.4 Proposed Design of the Trail Heads

Trailheads are proposed for the Barnesmore Gap Greenway to provide access, parking, rest facilities, and orientation points for users. These trailheads are designed to integrate with their surroundings, minimise visual impact, and provide a high-quality and accessible user experience.

Site selection has been informed by landscape sensitivity, with a preference for locations that benefit from existing enclosure, landform, or established urban context. This approach reduces the need for significant earthworks and avoids visually prominent or exposed locations.

The primary trailhead at Donegal Town is located within the existing urban fabric next to Donegal Railway Heritage Centre and St. John Bosco Community Centre. The trailhead incorporates car parking and public realm improvements along Tirchonail Street, including new pavement, lighting, bench seating, and bus parking. The greenway terminates in a public open space designed as an arrival point, incorporating seating areas, shelters, lighting, planters, and space for food trucks or coffee stalls. The design integrates with the existing streetscape and enhances the overall quality and usability of the town fringes.

At Ballybofey/Stranorlar, the trailhead strengthens connections within the urban fringe by linking the public footpath between the Finn Valley Leisure Centre and the Enterprise Centre.

Enhancements include improved footpaths and street lighting while strengthening the existing treeline along Railway Road and Mulreany Terrace. The trailhead provides sheltered seating areas, space for food trucks or coffee stalls, and a small open space adjacent to the Enterprise Centre, with car parking located to the rear. These elements are designed to integrate with the surrounding urban form while improving amenity and accessibility.

The intermediate rural trailheads at Lough Eske Demesne and Biddy's O'Barnes adopt a more contained approach, located within a naturally enclosed setting. Additional planting will reinforce enclosure and integrate the facilities into the surrounding landscape. Car parking will utilise a permeable reinforced grass surface to reduce visual prominence. Across all trailheads wayfinding and signage will be consistent, low-key, and designed to avoid visual clutter (refer to the Landscape Mitigation Drawings 60701883-ACM-ELS-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001-0031).

14.4.5 Existing Landscape Baseline

14.4.5.1 Landform

The topography of the study area is highly variable. The rolling drumlin landscape of Donegal Bay in the south-west transitions to a more undulating agricultural landscape around Lough Eske. Further north, this transforms into dramatic valley landscape surrounded by uplands at the border of Croaghnameal to the east and the Bluestack Mountain Range to the west. Beyond this, the hilly upland landscape surrounding the N15 and Lough Mourne slopes down to a more gently undulating agricultural landscape around Ballybofey and Stranorlar.

14.4.5.2 Land Use

The land use within the study area is predominantly agricultural. Fields vary in scale and shape, with larger, more uniform fields further north and more variable fields towards Donegal Bay. There are also blocks of forestry throughout the study area, with larger swaths in the more remote upland areas and around Lough Eske, and a windfarm in the east.

14.4.5.3 Walking Trails

There are several walking trails that are fully or partially located within the study area, both formal and informal, mainly composed of tracks or a series of connected local roads. A few of these trails are waymarked throughout. The established trails included in the assessment are as follows:

- **Bluestack Way:** This is a 65km walking route traversing the Bluestack Mountains which connects Donegal town with the town of Ardara on the west coast. This is waymarked throughout the study area.
- **The International Appalachian Trail (IAT) Ulster-Ireland:** This is a 450km, long-distance walking trail starting in West Donegal and finishing in Larne in County Antrim. The section that passes through the study area is Section 2: Glenties to Killeter. This is waymarked throughout the study area.
- **Lough Eske:** There are several walking routes around Lough Eske, including a 14km loop around the lake, a 6km loop along the western edge of the lake, a 2km loop within Ard na Mona Woods, and a 2km loop within the forest plantation west of the lake.
- **Barnesmore Gap to Salmon Leap:** This is a 15km point to point walking trail from Barnesmore Gap to the River Finn.
- **Croaghonagh:** This is a summit walking trail of Croaghonagh starting from Barnesmore Gap.
- **Drumboe Woods:** There are several walking routes within Drumboe Woods along the River Finn, including the 1km Drumboe Loop Walk.

14.4.5.4 Cycling Routes

There are two cycling routes that are partially located within the study area. These are as follows:

- *EuroVelo 1*: Atlantic Coast Route, a cycling route that follows the west coast of Ireland from Wexford to Derry. The sections that extend into the study area are Section 36: Bundoran – Donegal Town and Section 37: Donegal Town – Dungloe. These routes also form part of the Donegal Cycle Route.
- The North West Trail, a 126km cycle route through counties Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Leitrim, and Sligo in the North West of Ireland.

14.4.5.5 Description of Landscape Character,

The study area is partially located within six Landscape Character Areas (LCA) within County Donegal, as described in the Landscape Character Assessment of County Donegal published in May 2016 (refer also to EIAR Volume 3 Figure 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1401).

The LCAs have been described to determine the value of each of the LCAs within the study area and determine their susceptibility to potential changes resulting from the proposed development are explored below:

14.4.5.1.1 LCA 14: Finn Valley

This LCA occupies the easternmost portion of the study area and is largely influenced by the River Finn and the associated valley landscape that has formed within the surrounding uplands. Within the study area, the gently rolling landform of the LCT is covered by a patchwork of agricultural fields and some areas of forestry, as well as the historic woodlands of Drumboe and Dunwiley. The landscape is well settled by a series of rural properties and the twin towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar, connected by a series of local roads and the N15 national road.

Within the study area, this landscape exhibits positive character and a recognisable structure, defined by its river valley form, field patterns, woodland blocks and settlement framework. It has a clear sense of place associated with the Finn Valley and contains elements of local importance, including agricultural land use, historic woodland, recreational resources and long-established settlement patterns. Some features may be considered of regional interest, particularly the river corridor and historic estates.

The LCA also contains detracting features, including modern infrastructure, linear development, and settlement expansion, particularly around Ballybofey and Stranorlar. Land use is actively managed and, in places, influenced by infrastructure and urban fringe pressures. While it contains distinctive areas of landscape quality, these are not rare or irreplaceable at a regional or national scale. The value of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**.

The land use pattern and scale of the Finn Valley LCA indicate that it has the capacity to accommodate change without undermining its overall character. The susceptibility of this LCA is assessed to be Low. Accordingly, in line with TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 14: Finn Valley is assessed as **Medium**.

14.4.5.1.2 LCA 37: Donegal Bay Drumlins

This LCA occupies the westernmost and largest portion of the study area and is defined by a distinctive northeast-southwest oriented drumlin belt. Within the Study area, this drumlin belt is covered in a patchwork of hedgerow-bound agricultural fields of varying size interspersed with areas of woodland and forestry. The landscape is relatively well settled by a series of rural properties and Donegal Town, connected by local roads, the N15 and N56 national roads.

It has a clear sense of place, with locally important features such as farmland, historic settlement patterns, and links to the coast. The coastal edge of Donegal Bay and its association with the Wild Atlantic Way provide elements of regional recreational interest.

The LCA also contains detracting features, including modern infrastructure, settlement expansion and road corridors, particularly in and around Donegal Town. While the drumlin

landform is distinctive, the individual landscape elements are generally not rare or irreplaceable at a national level. The value of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**.

The character, land use pattern and scale of the area indicate that it has the capacity to accommodate change, particularly in areas already influenced by development. The susceptibility of this LCA is assessed to be **Low**. Accordingly, in line with TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 37: Donegal Bay Drumlins is assessed as **Medium**.

14.4.5.1.3 LCA 38: Bluestack (An Gaeltacht)

This LCA occupies the north-central portion of the study area and is defined by the upland areas of the Bluestack Mountain Range and the deep valley of Barnesmore Gap. Within the study area, the landscape comprises extensive heathland, blanket bog, loughs, limited forestry and agricultural areas. Settlement is minimal, with infrastructure largely confined to local roads and the N15 national road. A wind farm along the south-eastern slopes form a distinctive feature in the landscape.

This LCA is widely acknowledged for its high scenic quality, exhibiting a strong sense of remoteness, panoramic views, naturalness and an intact upland character. It contains ecological, cultural and recreational features of regional importance, and forms part of a broader upland landscape of recognised value. The landscape is distinctive and has relatively limited settlement influence.

While there are some detracting elements locally associated with the N15 and the wind farm, these do not dominate the overall character, the landscape value of this LCA is assessed to be **High**. The upland areas are generally susceptible to change, although parts of the valley influenced by existing infrastructure demonstrate some capacity to accommodate development without undermining overall character. The susceptibility of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**. In accordance with TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 38: Bluestack (An Gaeltacht) is assessed as **High**.

14.4.5.1.4 LCA 39: Lough Eske

This LCA occupies a central portion of the study area and is defined by Lough Eske. Within the study area, the landscape is covered by a patchwork of agricultural fields and large areas of ancient woodland and forestry. The landscape is sparsely settled by a series of rural properties, mostly clustered around a series of tree and hedgerow-bound local roads, as well as the Lough Eske Castle Hotel and Demesne and Harvey's Point Hotel. The N15 national road is located in the southwest of this LCA.

The landscape character is defined by the lake, woodland cover and enclosing uplands. It contains elements of local importance, including historic estates, woodland landscapes and recreational resources associated with the lake. There are strong cultural heritage associations and tourism-related uses.

Although the landscape has distinctive features and areas of acknowledged quality, it also contains detracting elements, including road infrastructure and dispersed development. The landscape value of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**. Much of the landscape is screened by mature vegetation, and the land use pattern and scale indicate that it has the capacity to accommodate change, particularly in areas influenced by the N15 corridor. The susceptibility of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**. In line with TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 39: Lough Eske is assessed as **Medium**.

14.4.5.1.5 LCA 40: Cashelnavern Border and Uplands

This LCA occupies a large eastern portion of the study area and is defined by the upland areas that surround Barnesmore Gap, and mountain lakes such as Lough Mourne. Within the study area, the landscape is covered by a patchwork of bog and large swaths of forestry, with some areas of farmland. Generally, this landscape is uninhabited; however, there is currently a large windfarm to the south-west, as well as few local roads and, the N15 national road.

The landscape displays a recognisable upland structure particularly in the more open bogland and around Lough Mourne. These areas have a sense of naturalness and some ecological

and recreational interest. However, large-scale forestry and wind energy infrastructure introduce detracting features that influence overall character.

The landscape is of local importance, with some elements of regional interest, but it does not exhibit nationally acknowledged or irreplaceable features. The value of this LCA is assessed to be **Medium**. Given the scale of existing land uses and infrastructure, the character and land use pattern indicate a capacity to accommodate change, particularly in areas already influenced by development and susceptibility of this LCA is assessed to be **Low**. Accordingly, under TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 40: Cashelnavern Border and Uplands is assessed as **Medium**.

14.4.5.1.6 LCA 41: Croaghnameal Border and Uplands

This LCA occupies a south-central portion of the study area and is defined by upland blanket bog and mountain lakes. Within the study area, the landscape is covered by large swaths of bog and some areas of heathland and forestry. Generally, this landscape is uninhabited, with infrastructure limited to a few local roads, and, within the valley, some settlement along the N15 road.

The landscape exhibits open scenic views, a pronounced sense of naturalness and relatively limited settlement influence. It contains ecological and recreational features of regional importance, and its upland character contributes significantly to the wider landscape framework. The area is relatively remote and retains a largely intact landform and vegetation pattern.

Although locally influenced by the N15 and some forestry, these elements do not dominate the wider upland character hence the landscape value of this LCA is assessed to be **High**. The landscape has a high susceptibility to change, particularly within the more natural upland areas, while parts of the valley corridor demonstrate some capacity to accommodate development.

In accordance with TII criteria, the **Landscape Significance and Sensitivity** of LCA 41: Croaghnameal Border and Uplands is assessed as **High**.

14.4.6 Seascape Designations

The study area, in particular the trail head off Station Road, Donegal is located within 1km of the shore edge of two Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) within County Donegal, SCA 19: Donegal Bay, as described in the Seascape Character Assessment of County Donegal 2016 (ref. 20) and SCA 4: Sligo Bay, as described in the Regional Seascape Character Assessment for Ireland 2020 (ref. 21). As both of these SCA cover the same area, they have been assessed together.

14.4.6.1.1 SCA 19: Donegal Bay / SCA 4: Sligo Bay

This SCA occupies the westernmost portion of the study area and is defined by the limestone cliffs, sandy estuary, and drumlin landscape of Donegal Bay. Within the study area, the coastline consists of agricultural landscape bordered by dune systems and large areas of intertidal habitat such as mudflats and sandflats. It also contains the estuary of the River Eske and is an internationally important Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The edge of the bay is well-used, with a high number of settlements along the coastline and a long cultural history of land use, fishing, and recreation. There are key views of the sea to the west and the land to the east from the coast; however, the proposed development has no views of the coastline. Although the value and susceptibility of the SCA are assessed as **High**, it will not be effected and is therefore not included in further assessment.

14.4.6.1.2 Urban Fabric Landscape Character Type

The study area includes Donegal Town and the conjoined settlements of Ballybofey and Stranorlar, all of which fall within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) – Urban Fabric as identified in the Donegal County Landscape Character Assessment and illustrated in For the purposes of this assessment, the Urban Fabric LCT is further subdivided into Urban Town Core and Urban Fringe Local Townscape Character Areas (LTCAs), reflecting differences in form, function, and townscape character.

These LTCAs are informed by Land Use Zoning Objectives (LUZOs) in the Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018–2024 and the Ballybofey/Stranorlar Area Plan 2024–2030, and refined through analysis of historic development patterns, vernacular architecture, urban grain, and legibility of place.

Donegal Urban Fabric LTCA

The Donegal Town Core is characterised by a compact urban form, with a well-defined historic structure centred on traditional streets and civic spaces. The built environment comprises historic stone buildings, narrow plot widths, and a coherent urban grain, contributing to a strong and recognisable townscape character. Streetscapes are visually cohesive and enhanced by mature street trees, traditional boundary treatments, and pedestrian-scaled environments. The presence of heritage assets and established commercial and civic functions reinforces the cultural and architectural value of the town centre.

This townscape character type exhibits a distinctive and high-quality urban fabric, containing elements of regional importance. While capable of accommodating some change, its historic fabric, visual integrity, and strong sense of place are sensitive to inappropriate development.

Ballybofey–Stranorlar Urban Fabric LLCA

The Ballybofey–Stranorlar Town Core comprises the conjoined centres of both settlements and is characterised by a compact but more varied urban structure. Development includes a mix of traditional and more recent buildings, resulting in a less uniform architectural character than Donegal Town. The townscape reflects its evolution as twin settlements, with a combination of commercial, civic, and residential uses. While there are elements of traditional streetscape and local distinctiveness, there is also a greater degree of variation in building form, scale, materials, and streetscape composition.

The town core retains a clear structure and active frontage along key routes, contributing to its identity and function. However, the overall coherence and consistency of the built form is more variable. This Landscape Character Type is of local importance, with identifiable urban value but a greater capacity to accommodate change without undermining its overall character.

Donegal Urban Fringes LLCA

The urban fringe of Donegal Town is characterised by transitional land uses at the interface between the built-up area and the surrounding rural landscape. Development typically includes low-density residential areas, commercial uses, light industrial development, and road infrastructure.

The urban fabric is more fragmented than the town core, with varied building types, inconsistent layout, and areas of surface parking and infrastructure. Vegetation and boundary treatments are present but do not form a strong or cohesive visual structure.

While the area contributes to the overall settlement pattern, it lacks the distinctiveness and visual coherence of the town core. However, the scale, layout, and evolving nature of development indicate a capacity to accommodate further change.

14.4.6.1.3 Ballybofey–Stranorlar Urban Fringes LLCA

The urban fringes of Ballybofey and Stranorlar comprise a mix of residential expansion areas, commercial premises, light industrial uses, and transport corridors. The townscape reflects incremental and dispersed development, with limited cohesion in layout or architectural character.

These areas are characterised by visible infrastructure, inconsistent building forms, and a fragmented visual structure. Undeveloped or transitional parcels are also present, contributing to a varied and sometimes indistinct townscape. The area is of local importance and contains a mix of neutral and detracting elements. While it forms part of the wider settlement context, it is not sensitive and has the capacity to accommodate change.

14.4.6 Landscape Significance / Sensitivity Assessment

The assessments of landscape value and susceptibility are combined to define the sensitivity of each landscape receptor within the study area, these being the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), and Local Townscape Character Areas (LTCAs) areas. The significance and sensitivity of these receptors is summarized in Table 14-8.

Table 14-8 - Landscape Significance / Sensitivity Assessment

Landscape Receptor			
	Value	Defining Criteria	Significance / Sensitivity
County Donegal Landscape Character Areas (LCA)			
LCA 14: Finn Valley	Medium	Contains elements of local importance, including agricultural land use, historic woodland, recreational resources and long-established settlement patterns.	Medium
LCA 37: Donegal Bay Drumlins	Medium	A clear sense of place and contains elements of local importance, including agricultural land use, historic settlement patterns and coastal associations.	Medium
LCA 38: Bluestack (An Gaeltacht)	High	High scenic quality, exhibiting a strong sense of remoteness, panoramic views, naturalness and an intact upland character.	High
LCA 39: Lough Eske	Medium	Contains elements of local importance, including historic estates, woodland landscapes and recreational resources associated with the lake.	Medium
LCA 40: Cashelnavern Border and Uplands	Medium	Contains elements of regional interest, but it does not exhibit nationally acknowledged or irreplaceable features.	Medium
LCA 41: Croaghnameal Border and Uplands	High	It contains ecological and recreational features of regional importance, and its upland character contributes significantly to the wider landscape framework.	High
SCA 19: Donegal Bay / Sligo Bay	High	The combination of limestone cliffs, estuarine landforms, coastal habitats and drumlin backdrop creates a landscape of national and international importance, reinforced by its SAC designation.	Very High
Urban Fringe Local Townscape Character Areas			
County Donegal Landscape Character Areas (LCA)			
Donegal Urban Fabric LTCA	High	It contains elements of regional importance, including architectural heritage, cultural associations and established civic spaces.	High
Ballybofey–Stranorlar Urban Fabric LTCA	Medium	The LTCA contains elements of local to regional importance, including a mix of traditional and more recent built form, active commercial areas, and established civic uses, contributing to a recognisable but more varied townscape character.	Medium

Landscape Receptor			
	Value	Defining Criteria	Significance / Sensitivity
Donegal Urban Fringes LTCA	Low	A less distinctive character than the town core, with some positive elements but also detracting features associated with infrastructure and fragmented development patterns.	Medium
Ballybofey–Stranorlar Urban Fringes LTCA	Low	A transitional and fragmented townscape with a mix of residential, commercial, and infrastructural uses, characterised by variable building forms and a reduced level of cohesion and distinctiveness.	Low

14.4.7 Existing Visual Baseline

14.4.7.1 Receptor Groups

The ratings below are assigned having regard to the examples and criteria set out in TII PE-ENV-01101 - Table 6 and the LVIA methodology in Table 14-3 above.

The main receptor groups within the study area are as follows:

14.4.7.1.1 Residents

Residents are viewers with a proprietary interest in their property and experience views on a prolonged and repeated basis. Where dwellings have direct or open views towards the proposed development, particularly from principal rooms, gardens or elevated locations, they are considered direct observers.

In some instances, long-distance views are filtered by vegetation or limited by topography; however, even where views are intermittent, residents are likely to perceive change as either adverse or beneficial due to their ongoing exposure and attachment to place.

Accordingly, residential receptors within the study area are assessed as having **High Visual Sensitivity**.

14.4.7.1.2 Vehicle Users

Vehicular traffic is present along all local, regional and national roads within the study area. Along these roads, views are transient in nature and are often viewed at speed.

On heavily trafficked routes or where the landscape is influenced or dominated by road infrastructure, vehicle users are considered to have Medium Visual Sensitivity, as they represent viewers with a moderate interest in their surroundings within a traffic-influenced landscape.

Where routes are recognised as scenic, or where road users experience views of distinctive landscapes, ridgelines, waterbodies or areas of ecological or cultural interest, visual sensitivity may increase in accordance with TII criteria. However, as views remain generally transient, they do not typically reach the same level as residential or recreational receptors.

Overall, vehicle users within the study area are assessed as having **Medium Visual Sensitivity**, unless otherwise specified at individual viewpoint locations.

14.4.7.1.3 Outdoor Workers

Outdoor workers, including farmers and employees within commercial or industrial premises, are generally focused on work-related activities rather than the appreciation of visual amenity.

In accordance with TII criteria, such viewers are considered to have a passing or secondary interest in their surroundings, particularly where views are experienced within working agricultural or infrastructure-dominated landscapes. Accordingly, outdoor workers are assessed as having **Low Visual Sensitivity**.

14.4.7.1.4 Recreational Users

The Recreational receptors include walkers, cyclists, users of scenic routes, visitors to lakes and open spaces, and guests at tourism-related facilities such as hotels.

Users of walking and cycling routes, lakes and scenic open spaces are considered to have a High Visual Sensitivity, as visual amenity forms a key component of their recreational experience.

Visitors travelling along scenic routes or using recreational facilities where appreciation of the landscape is an important component of the experience, are also considered to have High Visual Sensitivity, particularly where views encompass distinctive landscapes, ridgelines, waterbodies or sites of ecological and cultural interest.

Where recreational use is secondary to another purpose and views are more incidental, sensitivity may reduce to Medium; however, in general, recreational receptors within the study area are associated with appreciation of landscape character and scenic quality.

Accordingly, recreational users within the study area are assessed as having **High Visual Sensitivity**.

14.4.7.2 Scenic Routes, Scenic Views, and Areas of Scenic Amenity

14.4.7.2.1 Scenic Routes

Within the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 (CDDP), scenic routes are outlined as follows:

“The County has a network of scenic routes punctuated by multiple views and prospects of natural beauty over both seascape and the rural landscape. Many of the routes are recognised nationally and internationally, including the Wild Atlantic Way that extends around the entire coast, with its designated discovery points along its route, including three signature discovery points. There is a need to protect and conserve the character and quality of the identified stretches of scenic routes that have special views and prospects.”

As defined within the CDDP, there are two routes with scenic amenity value and interest partially located within the study area. These are shown in Volume 3 Drawing 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1402 and described as follows:

- **The Wild Atlantic Way**, which is partially composed of the N15 and N56 roads and follows the coastline around Donegal Bay. This route is a nationally recognised touring route of scenic and recreational importance, attracting visitors whose primary purpose includes appreciation of coastal and landscape views. As such, viewers are likely to have a strong interest in visual amenity, and where views are of high scenic quality, receptors along this route may be considered to have **High Visual Significance and Sensitivity**, or **Very High** where designated or protected views are present.
- **Barnesmore Gap** (N15), a distinctive mountain pass characterised by framed views, upland scenery and recognised scenic quality. This route provides notable views to and from ridgelines and upland landscapes of regional importance. While views are experienced in transit, the scenic nature of the pass and its recreational and tourism function indicate that road users may have a greater than passing interest in the landscape. Accordingly, visual receptors along this section of the N15 are generally considered to have **High Visual Significance and Sensitivity**, or **Very High** where designated scenic views and viewing points are present.

14.4.7.2.2 Scenic Views

There are three scenic views and prospects of special amenity value and interest within the study area located on the N15, as defined within the CDDP and shown in Volume 3 Drawing 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-EN-1402. These designated views are orientated towards the proposed development, with view cones and principal viewing directions aligned broadly southeast and northwest across the receiving landscape.

As designated scenic views within the CDDP, these receptors are considered to be of Very High sensitivity due to their formal recognition, scenic quality, and their role in protecting key landscape characteristics of County Donegal.

Scenic View of Lough Eske

This designated viewpoint is located on the N15 to the northeast of Lough Eske. The principal view is directed northwest across the lake, which sits prominently in the foreground and middle distance, backed by the upland slopes of Burns Mountain and the surrounding mountainous skyline.

The scenic composition is defined by the contrast between the reflective waterbody, enclosed pastoral and wooded margins, and the rising upland backdrop. The view is predominantly experienced by transient receptors travelling along the N15, although the elevated road alignment of the adjoining local road affords expansive panoramic views. Owing to its formal designation within the CDDP, this view is considered to be of **Very High sensitivity and significance**.

Scenic View southeast from Biddy O'Barnes to Barnesmore Gap

This viewpoint is located on the access road west of Biddy O'Barnes Pub, on the southwestern approach to Barnesmore Gap.

The view is orientated northeast towards the dramatic natural landform of Barnesmore Gap, where steep ridgelines enclose and frame the narrow mountain pass. The valley floor is traversed by the Lowerymore River, which contributes to the sense of depth and naturalness within the scene.

The defining characteristics of this view are the mountainous landform, the sense of enclosure created by the ridgelines, and the visual focus on the natural mountain corridor. The view is experienced primarily by road users and visitors to the area and is considered of **Very High sensitivity and significance** due to its scenic designation and distinctive landscape character.

Scenic View Northwest from Layby at Barnesmore Gap

This designated viewpoint is located at a layby and informal picnic area on the N15 to the northwest of Barnesmore Gap.

The view is directed southeast towards the mountain pass and is similarly defined by dramatic upland ridgelines framing the gap. The Lowerymore River meanders through the valley floor, reinforcing the natural and undeveloped character of the landscape. The composition provides a strong visual corridor into the mountainous interior and emphasises the scale and topographical drama of the gap.

As a formally designated Scenic View within the CDDP, this receptor is considered to be of Very High sensitivity. The presence of a layby and picnic area increases the likelihood of stationary receptors, thereby heightening the opportunity to enjoy the quality of the view.

Their preservation is a key policy within the CDDP. This policy is as follows:

- **L-P-7:** *"To preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value and interest as identified on Map 11.1."*

14.4.7.2.3 Areas of Scenic Amenity

The proposed development and study area intersect multiple designated Areas of Scenic Amenity, including one Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity, and several Areas of High Scenic Amenity and Moderate Scenic Amenity, as defined within the CDDP and illustrated in Volume 3 Drawing 60701883-ACM-EGN-SW_XX_XX_XX-DR-EN-1402.

Barnesmore Gap Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity

The Barnesmore Gap and its surrounding upland landscapes are designated as an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity. These are defined as follows:

- **Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA):** *"These are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County*

Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development.” CDDP.

Donegal to Lough Eske Area of High Scenic Amenity

The rural landscape flanking the N15 and surrounding Lough Eske, including the disused railway corridor forming part of the proposed development route, is designated as an Area of High Scenic Amenity.

- **Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA):** *“These are landscapes of significant aesthetic, cultural, heritage and environmental quality that are unique to their locality and form a fundamental element of the landscape and identity of County Donegal. These areas have the capacity to absorb sensitively located development of scale, design and use that will enable assimilation into the receiving landscape and which does not detract from the quality of the landscape, subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the plan.” CDDP*

Rural low lying farmlands of Moderate Scenic Quality

Pockets of farmland along the N15 and between Barnesmore Gap and Ballybofey are designated as Moderate Scenic Quality.

- **Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA):** *“These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.” CDDP*

The relevant policies within the CDDP are as follows:

- **L-P-1:** *“To protect areas identified as ‘Especially High Scenic Amenity’ on Map 11.1 ‘Scenic Amenity’. Within these areas, only developments of strategic importance, or developments that are provided for by policy elsewhere in this Plan may be considered.”*
- **L-P-2:** *“To protect areas identified as ‘High Scenic Amenity’ and ‘Moderate Scenic Amenity’ on Map 11.1 ‘Scenic Amenity’. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan.”*

14.4.8 Visual Receptors and Viewpoint Significance and Sensitivity

The selection of representative viewpoints for this LVIA has been carried out in accordance with the Methodology outlined in section 14.3.6 of this LVIA. Following the site visit, certain areas were excluded from detailed assessment due to limited or no discernible views:

- Agricultural land between Donegal Town and Lough Eske (north of the River Eske).
- Agricultural land between Donegal Town and Cloughfin (south of the N15).
- Lough Eske Castle and its grounds.
- Residential properties along Coppering Heights, Sessiagh View, and Navenny.

All remaining areas are assessed through representative viewpoints, as described below.

Table 14-9 - Assessment of Viewpoint Significance and Sensitivity

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
VP1 – View from Tirchonaiill Street looking northeast towards Railway Park	Residents, vehicle users, recreational users	Representative of views along Tirchonaiill Street overlooking Railway Park. A short-distance, open view looking east to undeveloped open grass land adjacent to the St. John Bosco Community Centre and bordered by a high mesh fence. Residential properties to the north overlook the open lands. This viewpoint is located within a broad area of Area of High Scenic Amenity, however the immediate landscape contains common urban elements including

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
(Donegal Town Trailhead and John Bosco Centre)		mesh fencing, open grass land and road infrastructure, resulting in a local view of low value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity - Vehicle Users and pedestrians will have a low sensitivity, as viewers are likely to have a passing interest in their surroundings. - Recreational Users will have a low sensitivity, as the purpose of recreation within the adjacent park is not primarily related to appreciation of the view. - Residents will have a high sensitivity due to proprietary interest and prolonged viewing opportunities. Considering the presence of residential receptors with a high sensitivity but within a view comprising unremarkable elements experienced from the road network, the overall visual significance / sensitivity is assessed as Low.
VP2 – View from pathway opposite St. Agatha's Church carpark, looking northwest.	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users	Representative of views along the N15. VP2 is short-distance and partially screened, looking west across the road to scrubby pasture and agricultural land bounded by mature hedgerows. The landscape contains common elements resulting in a low value view. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users & Pedestrians: Low sensitivity due to being a general road network. - Attendees of Church: Medium Sensitivity for viewers with a moderate interest in their environment whose attention is not focused on the surrounding landscape. Considering the highest receptor sensitivity and the relatively common landscape elements, the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as Low
VP3 – View from Carlougheask road, looking northwest across fields	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers	Representative of views along the L65351 local road. It is a mid-distance, open view looking south-east. Open agricultural land, bounded by low hedgerows to the east and west and a dense woodland to the south with scattered properties visible in the mid-ground. Upland areas are visible in the background. This viewpoint is located within an Area of High Scenic Amenity, with few detracting features, therefore the value of the view is High, Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Residents: High sensitivity due to frequent or prolonged exposure. - Vehicle Users: Low sensitivity, as vehicle users typically experience transient views, which are less sensitive. Considering receptor sensitivity is high in an area of High Scenic Amenity the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as High
L65351 Rural Road		
VP4 – View from track, looking northwest towards Lough Eske Castle.	Recreational users	This viewpoint represents short-distance, partially screened views along the forest trail, part of the International Appalachian Trail. Mature trees dominate the foreground and background, forming a typical forested landscape, with dense conifer plantation to the rear. The view is valued by trail users but is of a common landscape type and medium value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: Recreational Users: High sensitivity where the walking route to enjoy and experience the surrounding landscape is the primary purpose of recreation. Considering receptor sensitivity is high in a common place landscape the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as Medium.
Lough Eske Forest Trailhead (Coillte / IAT Route)		
VP5 – View from pier at Harvey's Point.	Outdoor workers, recreational users	This viewpoint is representative of views from the jetty at Harvey's Point Hotel. Long-distance, partially screened southeast view over Lough Eske to upland areas. High value view. Assessment of Sensitivity: - Outdoor Workers: Low sensitivity. - Recreational Users: High sensitivity due to appreciation of scenic quality. Considering the highest receptor sensitivity (recreational) and the quality of the landscape, the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as High.

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
VP6 – View from Lough Eske Bridge	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users	This viewpoint is representative of views from Lough Eske Bridge. Short-distance partially screened southwest view over Lough Eske and woodland to uplands. High value view. Assessment of Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users & Outdoor Workers: Moderate sensitivity. - Residents & Recreational Users: High sensitivity due to frequent or prolonged exposure. Considering the highest receptor sensitivity (residents) and the quality of the landscape, the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as High.
VP7 – View from field entrance adjacent to Mullanalamphry Road, overlooking N15	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers	This viewpoint is representative of views from a local road off the N15 national road. Mid-distance, partially screened northwest views over agricultural land, woodland, and uplands, adjacent to “views and prospects of special amenity value.” The view is distinctive and highly valued. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users: High sensitivity as the view is designated. - Residents: High sensitivity due to proximity and prolonged viewing. Considering the highest receptor sensitivity (residents) and the designated viewpoint the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as Very High.
VP8 – View from carpark in front of Biddy's O'Barnes restaurant	Vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users	This viewpoint is representative of views from the approaches to Biddy's O'Barnes. Mid-distance partially screened east views over car park, river, dense woodland, and Bluestack Mountains. Adjacent to “views and prospects of special amenity value” and therefore a high value view. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users & Outdoor Workers: Moderate sensitivity. - Recreational Users: High sensitivity due to scenic and regional landscape importance. This viewpoint is located directly adjacent to one of the “views and prospects of special amenity value and interest”, as defined within the CDDP. It is also located within an Area of High Scenic Amenity, overlooking an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity. The view is of a distinctive landscape that is regionally valued. Considering the highest receptor sensitivity (recreational) and the quality of the landscape, the overall visual significance/sensitivity is assessed as Very High.
VP9 – View from layby off N15 in Barnesmore Gap	Vehicle users, recreational users	This viewpoint is representative of views from the Barnesmore Bog Gap, which is a viewing and rest area off the N15 road. It is a mid- to long-distance, open view looking south-west. The valley landscape of Barnesmore Gap extends across the mid-ground, punctuated by overhead lines and framed by the steep uplands of the Bluestack Mountains, on which the alignment of the former Donegal Railway Line is discernible. Further upland areas form a layered backdrop in the distance. The view is expansive, distinctive and of high value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a high sensitivity, as the location functions as a designated rest and viewing area where appreciation of the landscape is an established activity. - Recreational Users will have a high sensitivity, given the intentional use of the rest area to experience scenic views within a designated landscape of County importance. Considering the high scenic value of the Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity and the elevated sensitivity of recreational receptors, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Very High.
VP10 – Barnesmore Gap Layby and Map Wall	Vehicle users, recreational users	This viewpoint represents views from the layby adjacent to the Barnesmore Gap Map Wall, a recognised landmark and rest area off the N15 listed as one of the “views and prospects of special amenity value and interest”, as defined within the CDDP. Forestry within the valley landscape of Barnesmore Gap occupies the mid-ground, framed by the steep uplands of the Bluestack Mountains. The view is distinctive, dramatic and regionally of high value.

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a medium sensitivity due to the designated stopping point and landmark feature encouraging appreciation of the landscape. - Recreational Users will have a high sensitivity, as the viewpoint is purposefully used to experience panoramic views within a County-designated scenic landscape. Given the high scenic value and the landmark status of this location within an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Very High.		
VP11 – View southeast from layby off N15. Former Donegal Railway Edge / Open Bog Landscape	Vehicle users, recreational users	This viewpoint represents views from the N15 along Lough Mourne. It is a mid-distance, open view looking south-east. A wide, flat bog landscape occupies the foreground, punctuated by overhead lines and areas of scrub. The edge of the former Donegal Railway Line is visible within the mid-ground. Further bogland and upland areas extend into the background, forming a simple but expansive landscape composition characteristic of the Barnesmore Gap. The view is distinctive and of high value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a medium sensitivity due to the scenic designation and openness of views along this section of the national road. - Recreational Users will have a high sensitivity where engaged in appreciation of the designated scenic landscape. Considering the High sensitivity of recreational users and the County-level designation as an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity and the distinctive character of the open bog landscape, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as High.
VP12 – View from access track across Lough Mourne	Vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users	This viewpoint represents views from the N15 along Lough Mourne. It is a mid-distance, open view looking south-east. A wide, flat bog landscape occupies the foreground, punctuated by overhead lines and areas of scrub. The edge of the former Donegal Railway Line is visible within the mid-ground. Further bogland and upland areas extend into the background, forming a simple but expansive landscape composition characteristic of the Barnesmore Gap. The view is distinctive and regionally of high value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a medium sensitivity due to the scenic designation and openness of views along this section of the national road. - Recreational Users will have a high sensitivity where engaged in appreciation of the designated scenic landscape. Considering the County-level designation as an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity and the distinctive character of the open bog landscape, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as High.
VP13 – Lough Mourne: Designated View and Scenic Corridor	Vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users	This viewpoint is representative of views from the L65343 local road, adjacent to the N15 national road. It is a mid-distance, open view looking south-west. The local road forms the foreground, bounded by the N15 to the west and a post-and-mesh fence to the east. Densely forested uplands rise in the mid-ground, punctuated by overhead lines. The Bluestack Mountains form the background skyline. While scenic, the view comprises relatively common landscape elements characteristic of the wider area and a medium value view. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a low sensitivity, as the view is experienced in transit along the local road. - Outdoor Workers will have a medium sensitivity due to prolonged exposure. - Recreational Users will have a medium sensitivity where appreciation of the upland setting forms part of the experience.

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
		Considering the relatively common landscape elements and the receptor profile, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Medium .
VP14 – View from local road along existing track	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers	This viewpoint represents views from the local road across the former Donegal Railway Line. It is a short-distance, partially screened view looking east. The former railway corridor occupies the foreground, bounded on either side by berms topped with mature beech hedgerows. The corridor continues into the background, forming a strong linear avenue feature within the semi-rural landscape. The mature hedgerows create a distinctive and enclosed view of medium value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a low sensitivity due to transient views. - Outdoor Workers will have a medium sensitivity due to prolonged exposure. The mature beech hedges provide a strong visual presence but the majority of visual receptors are vehicle users seeing the laneway at an oblique angle, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Medium.
VP15 – View from local road along existing track and The Beeches housing estate.	Residents, vehicle users, recreational users	This viewpoint represents views along The Beeches housing estate. It is a short-distance, partially screened view looking south-west. The former Donegal Railway Line occupies the foreground, bounded by berms topped with mature beech hedgerows forming a strong linear avenue. Residential properties are located on either side of the hedgerows in the foreground and mid-ground, integrating the corridor within the residential context the trees are strong feature in the landscape but the disused railway in its current state is a degraded element leading to low value view. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a low sensitivity. - Recreational Users will have a medium sensitivity. - Residents will have a high sensitivity due to proximity, proprietary interest and prolonged viewing opportunities. The distinctive beech-lined corridor within a residential setting is a strong landscape element within a residential setting, overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Medium.
VP16 – View from Navenny Street	Residents, vehicle users	This viewpoint represents views along Navenny Street in Ballybofey. It is a short- to mid-distance, partially screened view looking north. Navenny Street forms the foreground, with a construction site bounded by mesh fencing to the north. A residential property and hedge are visible in the mid-ground, along with partial views of the former river bridge. Mature vegetation partially screens longer-distance views towards the twin towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar. The view towards the river has local importance but with some degraded elements creating a low value view. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: - Vehicle Users will have a low sensitivity. - Residents will have a high sensitivity due to proprietary interest and prolonged exposure. Given the relatively common urban landscape elements and detracting features, the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Low.
VP17 – View from The Base Enterprise Centre. Stranorlar Trailhead	Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers	This viewpoint represents views from the Stranorlar Enterprise Centre, adjacent to the Finn Valley Leisure Centre and sports fields. It comprises a short- to mid-distance, partially screened view looking south. Open grass pasture occupies the foreground. Metal fencing and treelines in the mid-ground filter views towards the River Finn and residential properties along Navenny Street. Low hills form the distant horizon approximately 1 mile from the site. Overall the view contains common elements and is of low value. Assessment of Visual Sensitivity: Vehicle Users will have a low sensitivity.

Viewpoint	Receptor Type	Visual Significance / Sensitivity
		- Outdoor Workers will have a medium sensitivity due to duration of exposure. - Residents will have a high sensitivity reflecting proximity and proprietary interest. Considering the presence of residential receptors within an unremarkable landscape, viewed from the general road network the overall visual significance / sensitivity at this viewpoint is assessed as Low.

14.5 Mitigation Measures

14.5.1 Landscape Strategy

The following section should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Mitigation Drawings for the proposed development in Volume 3 (Drawings: 60701883-ACM-ELS-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001 to 0031)

The landscape strategy adopts a layered approach of hedgerow, woodland, and targeted infill planting to support integration of the greenway into its varied context, enhance biodiversity, and provide selective visual screening while retaining the inherent character of the landscape.

In Donegal Town, hedgerow planting along the Railway Road boundary will comprise native species consistent with the surrounding rural and peri-urban landscape character. In contrast, hedgerow planting around the car park boundary and adjacent to the St. John Bosco Community Centre will avoid thorny species and will instead use an evergreen mix to provide year-round visual structure and improve the interface with adjacent uses.

Woodland planting is proposed at selected locations to strengthen connectivity between existing woodlands, compensate for removed trees, and provide localised visual screening. This planting is also used to define settlement edges, particularly as the route approaches Stranorlar via suburban areas, where it responds to existing patterns of hedgerows and small woodland belts to provide filtering of views.

Across the route, planting is applied as infill of existing gaps and as mitigation to reduce specific visual openings. However, given the low-profile nature of the greenway and the open, elevated character of sections through Barnesmore Gap, planting has been carefully moderated to avoid introducing continuous linear belts or rows of trees that would be uncharacteristic of the landscape and visually intrusive in open upland views.

At the proposed watercourse crossing at Bidy's O'Barnes, a small area of wet heath habitat will be permanently lost as a result of the greenway construction. To mitigate this loss, a heathland restoration area will be established on suitable adjacent land. This will include the translocation of heather and other heathland species sourced from the affected area to encourage the establishment of wet heath vegetation that reflects the composition and character of the habitat being lost. Species proposed for heathland restoration include Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*).

In line with TII guidance, earthworks and embankments will be allowed to regenerate naturally using site-won topsoil. This approach makes use of the existing seed bank within the soil and helps ensure that vegetation establishes in a way that reflects the local landscape. Establishment will be monitored during the early years, and where vegetation cover is slow to establish or becomes dominated by undesirable species, targeted seeding or management will be carried out to ensure a stable and visually coherent finish.

Where seeding is required, the choice of grassland mix will respond to local conditions. Drier, free-draining slopes will generally be seeded with a species-rich grassland mix made up of fine grasses and wildflowers, managed through seasonal cutting. In more sheltered areas, particularly beneath or adjacent to woodland planting, a shade-tolerant mix will be used to

reflect lower light levels and ensure successful establishment. Within woodland blocks, ground vegetation will be allowed to develop naturally over time, supplemented where necessary with shade-tolerant species to support early establishment. In lower-lying areas or locations subject to seasonal wetness, such as drainage features or floodplain edges, a wetland grassland mix will be used, comprising more robust species suited to wetter soils and occasional inundation.

Overall, the strategy balances integration, screening, and ecological enhancement with the need to retain the open character of the wider landscape. It ensures that planting is contextualised, strengthening rural character in enclosed areas while remaining restrained and discontinuous in more exposed upland locations.

14.5.2 Mitigation of the Trail Heads

Landscape interventions at the two primary trailheads at Donegal and Ballybofey include structural planting around car park perimeters to soften the visual presence of hard surfacing and built elements such as signage and bathroom facilities.

For the intermediate trailheads, tree and shrub planting will be introduced where necessary to bolster this screening and to create a sense of enclosure appropriate to the scale and character of the surrounding landscape.

Boundary treatments around all trailheads will consist of native hedgerows or low woodland blocks to limit visibility from nearby receptors, particularly from residential properties and elevated viewpoints. Where bathroom blocks will be designed with simple forms and clad in timber, ensuring that built elements remain subordinate to the landscape setting.

Planting schemes will use locally appropriate native species that respond to the underlying landscape character and provide seasonal interest as well as biodiversity benefits. The landscape treatment of the trailheads forms a key part of the scheme's broader mitigation strategy, ensuring that these necessary interventions do not compromise the visual or experiential quality of the greenway route. Refer to Trailhead layout Drawings 60701883-ACM-HGN-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001, 0002, 0003 & to 0006 in Volume 3 of this EIAR.

14.5.3 Construction Phase

During the construction phase, mitigation measures will be implemented in accordance with the *Guidelines on the Implementation of Landscape Treatments on National Road Schemes in Ireland* (Transport Infrastructure Ireland, 2006), which set out requirements for the protection of existing vegetation, appropriate handling of landscape features, and the reinstatement of disturbed areas following construction. Tree protection measures will also be undertaken in accordance with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*, which provides detailed technical guidance on protecting trees during construction.

The Landscape Mitigation Drawings (Drawings: 60701883-ACM-ELS-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001 to 0031) identify both the permanent land take required for construction and operation of the greenway and the temporary land take required during the construction phase for haul roads, compounds, site accesses, stockpiles, and associated working areas. Temporary construction activities will be confined to the temporary land take areas identified by the blue boundary line on the Landscape Mitigation Drawings in order to clearly distinguish temporary works from the permanent footprint of the proposed greenway infrastructure.

Temporary fencing will be erected prior to the commencement of works around all compounds, haul roads, and temporary access routes to define the extent of temporary construction areas and prevent unnecessary encroachment into adjoining vegetation, habitats, agricultural land, and retained landscape features. This fencing will also function as tree and vegetation protection fencing, preventing construction activity, storage, or vehicle access within Root Protection Areas (RPAs) identified by the project Arboriculturist. All protective fencing will be installed prior to any site clearance or earthworks commencing and will remain in place for the duration of the construction works. The alignment and stand-off distance of fencing adjacent to retained trees, hedgerows, and treelines will be determined by the Arboriculturist.

and Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) to ensure adequate protection of retained vegetation and habitats.

The fencing for temporary compounds and haul routes will generally be set back from existing hedgerow and treeline boundaries to avoid unnecessary habitat loss and to protect root systems and established vegetation. Existing field boundaries, hedgerows, and treelines not directly affected by the works will be retained wherever practicable, in line with TII guidance promoting the retention of existing landscape features. Where minor vegetation removal within hedgerows is required to facilitate temporary access into compounds or construction areas, these sections will be reinstated and replanted with locally appropriate native species following completion of the works.

Trees and hedgerows adjacent to construction areas will be protected through exclusion fencing and clearly defined Root Protection Areas to prevent damage from machinery, storage, excavation, or soil compaction. Construction activity will be confined to defined working corridors to reduce the overall footprint of disturbance.

Topsoil will be carefully stripped, stored, and reused on site to retain its structure and existing seed bank. This will support natural regeneration across disturbed areas, particularly on embankments and earthworks. Soil handling procedures will avoid unnecessary mixing or compaction to maintain soil viability and support successful reinstatement.

On completion of the works, all temporary compounds, haul routes, access tracks, fencing, and other temporary construction infrastructure within the temporary land take will be removed and the affected areas fully reinstated. Reinstatement works will include regrading, replacement of stored topsoil, and reseeded or planting with locally appropriate native species to restore visual and ecological continuity with the surrounding landscape.

14.5.4 Operational Phase

Following construction, the greenway will benefit from a comprehensive suite of operational phase mitigation and enhancement measures. The proposed planting, detailed in the Landscape Mitigation Plans in Volume 3 (Drawings: 60701883-ACM-ELS-SW_ZZ_ZZ_ZZ-DR-LV-0001 to 0031) will screen and soften views of the route, particularly in sensitive or exposed locations. The planting strategy has been designed to contribute to biodiversity net gain, re-establish traditional field patterns, and reinforce existing landscape character.

New hedgerows consisting of native species mixes which reflect the character of existing field patterns and woodland blocks will also help improve habitat connectivity by linking fragmented ecological corridors. This will support local wildlife populations and improve the resilience of the landscape to environmental change.

In the long term, a Greenway Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan will guide the care and maintenance of planted areas. This will ensure that mitigation measures establish effectively, continue to function as intended, and contribute positively to the character and visual quality of the greenway over time. A breakdown of the elements detailed in this plan are included in Appendix 4.2 Maintenance and Management Plan.

14.5.5 Monitoring

An establishment period will be implemented following completion of the works, during which all new planting will be subject to regular inspection and maintenance by the approving authority. This will include weed control, mulching, and replacement of any planting failures to ensure the successful establishment of hedgerows, woodland blocks, and other vegetation.

Particular attention will be given to areas of natural regeneration on embankments and earthworks. These areas will be monitored to ensure adequate vegetation cover is achieved and maintained. Where establishment is patchy, slow, or dominated by undesirable species, selective intervention will be undertaken, including overseeding or localised planting, to secure a stable and visually appropriate outcome.

Beyond the initial establishment period, long-term monitoring will be carried out at regular intervals as part of the greenway's management framework overseen by the Local Authorities.

This will help ensure that the scheme continues to meet its landscape and ecological objectives and adapts appropriately to environmental or management changes over time.

14.6 Description of Potential Impacts

14.6.1 Do Nothing Scenario

The Do-Nothing Scenario is defined within the TII LVIA guidelines as “*The likely state and evolution of the landscape if the proposed development does not go ahead*”.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Do-Nothing Scenario is considered over a 30-year period. In the absence of the proposed development, the landscape would continue to evolve under existing land management practices. Agricultural land is expected to remain in active use, while areas outside of active management would remain largely unchanged. Vegetation would continue to mature over time.

Urban lands within Donegal Town and the twin towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar would likely be developed in accordance with the Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018–2024 and the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030.

Based on these considerations, in the absence of the proposed development the baseline landscape character description over the next 30 years is expected to remain broadly consistent with the current baseline. Gradual changes, such as the maturation of vegetation and urban development aligned with local plans will occur, however, the overall landscape character is anticipated to remain relatively stable, with no significant deviations from the current conditions.

14.6.2 Landscape Effects

In accordance with TII guidance, landscape effects describe the changes to the landscape resource arising from the proposed development, assessed relative to the established baseline.

This section considers landscape effects during the construction phase and at Year 1 of operation. Residual landscape effects, taking account of the maturation of mitigation planting, are assessed separately in Section 14.7 (Year 15), following establishment of the landscape strategy outlined in Section 14.6.

14.6.2.1 Potential Construction Impacts

Landscape effects during construction of the proposed development will likely result from the following:

- Temporary site infrastructure and its effects, such as site traffic, access roads, road closures, traffic management works, signage, fencing, machinery storage and movement, material storage, and construction compounds; and
- Physical effects such as soil and surface disturbance and compaction, removal of vegetation and boundary treatments, resurfacing, construction of new structures and fencing, localised erosion, and partial reprofiling of the existing topography.

14.6.2.2 Potential Operational Impacts (Year 1)

Following the removal of the surface disturbance within the working width of the proposed development and the completion of construction works the local landscape character along the corridor would begin to restore. Key elements of the landscape restoration would include the reinstatement of wall and earth bank boundaries and the replacement of planting in order to reconnect field boundaries and patterns. However, it is unlikely that any vegetation would be established, to the extent that it would provide mitigation, within year 1, and has therefore not been considered in this assessment.

The assessment of these construction and operational (year 1) phase effects on the relevant landscape receptors is outlined in Table 14-10 to

Table 14-17.

Table 14-10 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 14

LCA 14: Finn Valley

Relationship to LCA / Sensitivity

The proposed development and study area are partially located within the LCA, resulting in direct effects. Sensitivity is **Medium**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction will result in small-scale loss of pasture and sections of hedgerow to facilitate the greenway, fencing, and associated structures. Temporary increases in activity from construction traffic and machinery will locally reduce the perception of naturalness within this semi-rural landscape.

Effects will be largely confined to the Site and its immediate setting due to limited intervisibility, influenced by topography, existing vegetation, and the presence of nearby settlements (Ballybofey and Stranorlar). Mature hedgerows and berms retained along the former railway corridor will further restrict visibility of construction activity.

Overall, effects on the wider LCA will be limited. The magnitude of impact is Low, localised, temporary, and reversible. Combined with Medium sensitivity, this results in a **Slight Adverse effect, Not Significant**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

Operation will introduce greenway infrastructure, resulting in minor land use change within a small part of the LCA. This will slightly reduce the sense of naturalness locally but will not alter the key characteristics or defining qualities of the LCA. Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity results in a **Slight and Negative effect**, which is Not Significant.

Table 14-11 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 37

LCA 37: Donegal Bay Drumlins

Relationship to LCA / Sensitivity

The proposed development and study area are partially located within the LCA, resulting in direct effects. Sensitivity is **Medium**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction will result in the medium-scale loss of arable pasture, hedgerow, and some woodland within the study area to facilitate the greenway, fencing, and associated structures. Increased activity from construction traffic and machinery will locally reduce the perception of naturalness within this semi-rural landscape.

Effects will be largely confined to the Site and its immediate setting due to limited intervisibility, influenced by local topography, vegetation, and the presence of Donegal Town and its fringes. Existing vegetation and landform will further restrict visibility of construction activity.

Overall, effects on the wider LCA will be limited. The magnitude of impact is **Low**, across a medium extent, temporary, and reversible. Combined with Medium sensitivity, this results in a **Slight Adverse effect, Not Significant**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

Operation will introduce greenway infrastructure, resulting in minor land use change within a limited part of the LCA. This will slightly reduce the sense of naturalness locally but will not alter the key characteristics or defining qualities of the LCA. Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity results in a **Slight and Negative effect**, which is Not Significant.

Table 14-12 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 38

LCA 38: Bluestack (An Gaeltacht)

Relationship to LCA \ Sensitivity

The proposed development and study area are partially located within the LCA, resulting in direct effects. Sensitivity is **High**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction will involve modification of the former Donegal Railway line and the introduction of greenway infrastructure, fencing, and associated structures. Increased activity from construction traffic and machinery will locally reduce the perception of naturalness and wildness within this remote landscape.

Effects will be largely confined to the Site and its immediate setting due to limited intervisibility, influenced by topography and vegetation. The presence of the N15 and overhead lines reduces the perceived remoteness of the valley floor and limits the wider influence of construction activity.

While construction activity will be visible and locally distinctive, effects on the wider LCA will be limited and temporary.

The magnitude of impact is **Medium**, across a medium extent, temporary, and reversible. Combined with High sensitivity, this results in a **Moderate Adverse effect, Significant**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

Operation will introduce greenway infrastructure into a remote landscape, resulting in a minor land use change within a limited part of the LCA. This will slightly reduce the sense of naturalness locally but will not alter the defining characteristics of the LCA, noting the existing influence of the N15. Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a **Slight and Negative** effect, which is Not Significant.

Table 14-13 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 39

LCA 39: Lough Eske

Relationship to LCA / Sensitivity

The proposed development and study area are partially located within the LCA, resulting in direct effects. Sensitivity is **High**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

The construction of the proposed development will result in the loss of arable pasture and some areas of hedgerow and woodland, at a small scale in relation to the portion of the LCA within the study area, to facilitate the construction of the greenway, fencing, and structures.

Construction will introduce additional activity and disturbance from construction vehicle and machinery movements within parts of the landscape that are currently remote and will reduce the perception of naturalness within a limited part of the LCA.

The construction activity is likely to have little perceptible change upon the key characteristics of the LCA as a whole and will be limited to the Site and its immediate setting. This is due to the lack of intervisibility within the area due to existing vegetation and the presence of the N15. The existing vegetation within the area around Lough Eske in particular somewhat restricts the visibility, and therefore the resulting disturbance, of construction activity. Although the construction activity will be distinctive within this semi-rural landscape, the reduction in the quality of the landscape setting will be temporary and experienced within only part of the LCA.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, temporary, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity, results in a **Moderate and Negative** effect, which is **Significant**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

The operation of the proposed development will result in the change in land use with the addition of greenway infrastructure into a remote landscape. This will alter some landscape characteristics and there will be a small reduction in the sense of naturalness across a limited proportion of the LCA; however, the proposed development will not change the defining perceptual qualities within the LCA due to the existing influence of the N15 and local roads.

Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a **Slight** and **Negative** effect, which is Not Significant.

Table 14-14 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 40

LCA 40: Cashelnavern Border and Uplands

Relationship to LCA	Sensitivity
Direct landscape effects on the LCA as the proposed development and study area is partially located within the LCA boundary	Medium
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase	
The construction of the proposed development will result in changes to the existing Donegal Railway line to facilitate the construction of the greenway, fencing, and structures. Construction will introduce additional activity and disturbance from construction vehicle and machinery movements within parts of the landscape that are currently remote and will reduce the perceptual characteristics of naturalness and remoteness within a limited part of the LCA. The construction activity is likely to have some perceptible change upon the key characteristics of the LCA as a whole. Some sections will have limited intervisibility within the area due to existing topography and vegetation, while other sections will be exposed and located within areas of high natural content, along Lough Mourne and within areas of bog; however, the influence of the N15 detracts from the sense of naturalness adjacent to the Site. Some of the existing vegetation and topography of the area somewhat restricts the visibility, and therefore the resulting disturbance. The impact of this disturbance is reduced by the location of the proposed development along the disused railway line. Although construction activity will be distinctive within this remote landscape, the reduction in the perceptual qualities will be temporary and experienced within only part of the LCA. The magnitude of effect is assessed to be Medium, over a medium geographical extent, temporary, and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity, results in a Moderate and Negative effect, which is Significant.	
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)	
The operation of the proposed development will result in the change in land use with-in a remote landscape. This will alter some landscape characteristics and there will be a small reduction in the sense of naturalness across a limited proportion of the LCA; however, the proposed development will not change the defining perceptual qualities within the LCA due to the existing influence of the N15. Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established. The magnitude of effect is assessed to be Low, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a Slight and Negative effect, which is Not Significant.	

Table 14-15 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – LCA 41

LCA 41: Croaghnameal Border and Uplands

Relationship to LCA	Sensitivity
Direct landscape effects on the LCA as the proposed development and study area is partially located within the LCA boundary	High
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase	
The construction of the proposed development will result in changes to the existing disused railway line and some loss of open areas and loss of sections of hedgerow, at a very small scale in relation to the portion of the LCA within the study area. Construction will introduce additional activity and disturbance from construction machinery movements within parts of a remote landscape reducing the perceived naturalness within the LCA. The construction activity will be barely perceptible upon the characteristics of the LCA as a whole due to existing topography and vegetation. The N15, Biddy's O'Barnes and its associated car park and road, detract from the sense of remoteness within the valley. The existing vegetation and topography of the area restricts visibility, and although construction activity will be distinctive within this remote landscape, the reduction in quality of the landscape setting will be temporary.	

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a medium geographical extent, temporary, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity, results in a **Moderate** and **Negative** effect, which is **Significant**.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

The operation of the proposed development will result in the change in land use in a remote landscape. This will alter landscape characteristics due to a reduction in the sense of naturalness, however due to the influence of the N15, the proposed development will not change the defining landscape qualities within the LCA.

Any proposed planting to replace vegetation lost during construction and mitigation planting will not yet be established. The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a **Slight** and **Negative** effect, which is Not Significant.

Table 14-16 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – Urban Fabric LCT

Urban Fabric LCT

Relationship to LCT	Sensitivity
The proposed development does not lie within the town cores of either Donegal or Stranorlar, but within the urban fringes, outside the historic centres. As a result, there are no direct landscape effects on the Urban Fabric LCT.	Medium
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase	
Construction activities will be confined to the urban fringe areas outside the historic cores. Due to limited visibility from within the town centres, arising from existing buildings, vegetation, and landform, construction activity will have no direct influence on these areas. Any disturbance will be temporary, localised, and experienced only at the outer edges of the historic cores.	
The magnitude of effect on the historic town cores is assessed as Imperceptible , temporary and reversible. Combined with Medium sensitivity, the resulting effect is Neutral / Not Significant .	
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)	
During operation, the characteristics of the historic cores will remain unchanged. The magnitude of effect is assessed as Imperceptible , permanent and reversible. Combined with Medium sensitivity, the resulting effect is Neutral / Not Significant	

Table 14-17 - Assessment of Landscape Effects – Urban Fringes LCT

Urban Fringes LCT

Relationship to the LCT	Sensitivity
The trailhead locations at each end of the greenway, lie within the urban fringes of Donegal Town and Ballybofey/Stranorlar. These areas form the transition between the built-up settlements and the surrounding landscape.	Medium
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase	
Construction will require localised works within the urban fringe, including minor vegetation removal (e.g., sections of hedgerow), fencing, and new path structures. These areas already experience settlement-related activity, and construction disturbance will be perceptible but contained within the Site and its immediate setting.	
The change will be temporary, reversible, and will not alter the overall character of the urban fringe landscapes. The magnitude of effect is assessed as Medium over a small extent, temporary and reversible. Combined with Medium sensitivity, this results in a Moderate Negative effect, which is Significant .	
Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)	
During operation, the greenway will introduce new recreational infrastructure within the urban fringe, along with improvements to the local streetscape. In Donegal Town, this includes upgraded pavements, lighting, and boundary treatments in the vicinity of the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre and St. John Bosco Community Centre. In Ballybofey and Stranorlar, improvements include enhanced footways, lighting, parking, and boundary treatments along Railway Road, connecting to the Enterprise Centre and Finn Valley Leisure Centre. These changes will introduce a more managed and accessible environment, resulting in a slight reduction in the existing semi-rural character in places. Mitigation planting will not yet be fully established but will define the boundaries of	

the scheme and enhance the appearance of the development by visually breaking up areas of car parking and hard pavement.

The magnitude of effect is assessed to be **Low**, over a small geographical extent, permanent, and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity results in a **Slight** and **Negative** effect, which is Not Significant.

14.6.3 Visual Effects

14.6.3.1 Potential Construction Impacts

Construction activity will be visible to all visual receptors, as identified Section 14.3. Areas experiencing visual effects during the construction stage will vary, depending on the active construction phase. The majority of works will be experienced locally within the construction corridor. Visual effects within the locality or the wider study area during the construction of the proposed development will likely result from the following:

- Temporary site infrastructure and its effects, such as site traffic, access roads, traffic management works, signage, fencing, machinery storage and movement, material storage, and construction compounds;
- Physical effects from site clearance works, such as removal of vegetation and boundary treatments, resurfacing, etc.; and
- The construction of new structures and the installation of fencing at points along the length of the proposed development.

14.6.3.2 Potential Operational Impacts (Year 1)

Following the completion of construction works, the visual character along the corridor of the proposed development would begin recover through the implementation and early establishment of mitigation measures. This includes the reinstatement of wall and earth bank boundaries and the replacement of removed boundary planting in accordance with the Landscape Strategy / Mitigation (Section 14.6). At Year 1, these mitigation measures will be in place but not yet fully established and therefore will provide limited visual screening. As such, the assessment does not assume any significant contribution from planting at this stage, in line with the LVIA methodology.

14.6.3.3 Representative Viewpoints

The assessment of construction and operational (year 1) phase effects from the representative viewpoints are outlined in Table 14-18 to Table 14-34

Table 14-18 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 1

Viewpoint 1 - View from Tirchonail Street looking northeast towards Railway Park

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users		East
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Low	High (Residents / recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction activity associated with the greenway will be clearly visible at short distance from Tirchonail Street. Ground-level works, vehicle movements, and taller machinery will be largely open to view, with limited screening due to the proximity of the trailhead location. Residential receptors along O'Cleirigh Avenue and outdoor workers will experience direct and largely unobstructed views of this activity.

Although Tirchonail Street and Railway Park already contain a degree of movement and activity, construction works will introduce a noticeably higher level of disturbance within the view. Vehicle users and recreational users will experience direct but partly oblique views as they travel through the area; construction elements may not be the primary focus but will still be noticeable.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible (Significant).

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1 of operation, the completed Donegal Town trailhead will include upgraded pavements, lighting, seating, bus parking, fencing and hedge planting along Railway Road, and the new public realm interface along Tirchonail Street, together with the arrival space at the greenway terminus.

At this stage new street trees and hedge planting will begin to provide visual containment and define boundaries. Although not yet mature, these elements will start to reduce the visual exposure of hardstanding areas and help integrate the scheme into the existing urban edge. The public realm works, including paving, lighting, seating, and planters, will contribute to a more coherent streetscape.

Overall, the scheme will represent a clear improvement in the quality and legibility of the urban edge, despite the limited maturity of planting in Year 1, but also contribute positively to the character and amenity of the area for both visitors and the local community.

Assessment: Slight beneficial visual effect, permanent and positive in nature.

Table 14-19 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 2

Viewpoint 2 - View from pathway opposite St. Agatha's Church carpark, looking northwest.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users		West
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Low	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, the proposed greenway works will be partially visible in the foreground and middle distance from this viewpoint. Temporary construction activity, including vegetation clearance, minor earthworks, fencing installation, and potential movement of machinery, will be noticeable beyond the existing N15. The visual change will be moderate in scale, short term and reversible upon completion of construction.

Assessment: Moderate adverse visual effect, short-term and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1 of operation, the greenway will be visible in the foreground and middle distance, partially filtered by retained vegetation and scrub along fence lines. The visual change will be modest, as the greenway will introduce linear path surfacing and low-scale signage or boundary elements into a landscape already shaped by infrastructure and agriculture. The development is permanent, but the scale of change is small and will be softened over time by planting and vegetation regrowth.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect.

Table 14-20 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 3

Viewpoint 3 - View from Carlougheask road, looking northwest across fields

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers		South-east
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Medium	High (Residents)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During construction, works associated with the greenway will be partially visible in the mid-ground of this open agricultural setting. Visual effects will result from temporary site activity including machinery, material storage, and vegetation clearance, which will introduce movement and construction-related features into a largely tranquil and undeveloped view. In this location, with potential glimpsed views towards a significant bridge crossing construction works are likely to be more substantial involving larger machinery and cranes. The scale of the visual change is moderate, short-term and reversible once construction is complete.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the first year of operation, the greenway scheme will be clearly visible in the foreground but will be barely perceptible in the lower middle-distance views, particularly at the location of the proposed river crossing. Although the proposed bridge is substantial in scale, it remains barely perceptible in views along the L65351 and is imperceptible from viewpoints on the opposite side of the river valley.

Assessment: Slight to moderate negative visual effect, permanent but limited in scale.

Table 14-21 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 4

Viewpoint 4 - View from track, looking northwest towards Lough Eske Castle.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Recreational users		East
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
Medium	Low	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

From the forest trail construction activity for the greenway will be visible at short distance. While ground-level works may be partly screened by intervening vegetation, construction vehicles and taller machinery will be noticeable. Works occur directly along sections of the existing trail, resulting in clear views for users on these segments. Elsewhere, retained forest vegetation will filter or screen activity, although occasional direct views will occur where vegetation clearance has taken place.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible (Significant).

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1 of operation, recreational users will have direct views of the completed greenway where the route intersects with the existing forest trail, as well as filtered views from adjoining sections where vegetation has been thinned or cleared.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, permanent (Not Significant).

Table 14-22 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 5

Viewpoint 5 - View from pier at Harvey's Point.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Outdoor workers, recreational users		South-east
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Medium	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, works associated with the greenway will occur at a significant distance from this viewpoint and will be partially screened by the dense woodland bordering Lough Eske. Although limited movement or disturbance may be perceptible in the far middle-distance, especially if vegetation is seasonally open, the scale of change will be small due to distance, vegetative screening, and the modest nature of construction activity. Any visual effect will be short-term, minor in scale, and fully reversible.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, short-term and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

At Year 1 of operation, the greenway will be barely perceptible from this viewpoint, appearing beyond the immediate wooded shoreline in the mid-ground. Given the distance involved and strong enclosure provided by intervening woodland, the greenway will form a Imperceptible visual element within a wide, layered panorama that includes open water, forest, and upland terrain. The scheme introduces no dominant features or large-scale interventions visible from this location.

Assessment: Imperceptible visual effect, permanent but very limited in extent.

Table 14-23 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 6

Viewpoint 6 - View from Lough Eske Bridge

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Medium	High (Residents / recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, works may be briefly visible in the background and partially within the middle-distance of this view, depending on the extent of woodland filtering. Works to the existing bridge will be short term and limited to surface treatment only. Lough Eske and its surrounding vegetation dominate the foreground, while dense woodland and upland terrain occupy the mid-ground and background. Construction activity associated with the greenway, such as vegetation clearance or machinery, may introduce temporary movement and visual contrast within what is otherwise a tranquil landscape. As a result, the overall visual effect is expected to be moderate in scale, short-term in duration, and fully reversible.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

By Year 1 of operation, the greenway will be subtly integrated into the wooded setting beyond the bridge and partially screened from this viewpoint. While it may be glimpsed through breaks in the vegetation, particularly in winter months, its presence will be visually recessive, comprising narrow surfacing and low-key features such as signage or fencing. The primary character of the view—defined by water, woodland, and upland backdrop—will remain unchanged. The greenway will therefore represent a small-scale and non-dominant change to the landscape, with limited visibility and a low degree of contrast against existing features.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, permanent but minor in scale.

Table 14-24 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 7

Viewpoint 7 - View from field entrance adjacent to Mullanalamphry Road, overlooking N15

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers		North-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	High	High (Residents / recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

This viewpoint is located adjacent to a designated “view and prospect of special amenity value and interest” and provides a panoramic vista encompassing open farmland, woodland edges, Lough Eske, and the backdrop of upland terrain. During the construction phase, the proposed greenway will be introduced into the mid-ground landscape near the woodland edge. Construction activities may be largely screened by hedgerows and woodland. Although the activity will be barely noticeable within a high value landscape. The effect will be minor in scale, short-term and reversible.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, short-term and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the greenway will be entirely screened by existing hedgerows and woodland edges. Its design and materials will be deliberately restrained to integrate into the existing landform and vegetative framework. Despite the visual sensitivity of the setting, the scale of change will be Imperceptible, with no prominent structures introduced. The view toward Lough Eske and the uplands will remain uninterrupted.

Assessment: Imperceptible visual effect.

Table 14-25 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 8

Viewpoint 8 - View from carpark in front of Biddy's O'Barnes restaurant

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users		East
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	High	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

From Biddy's O'Barnes and its car park, construction activity associated with the greenway will be visible at short distance, with largely open views of ground works, machinery, and vehicle movements. Construction of the trailhead north of this viewpoint will introduce additional activity. Workers, visitors, and those using the outdoor seating area will experience direct, largely unobstructed views of construction. Although existing movement from the local road, car park, and N15 provides baseline activity, construction will represent a noticeable increase. Vehicle users and recreational users travelling through the area will have direct views, with N15 users experiencing more oblique, brief views at speed.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible (Significant).

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1, the completed greenway—including the trailhead, surfacing, and associated fencing—will remain prominently visible from Biddy's O'Barnes and the adjacent car park. Workers, visitors, and road users in the immediate area will have direct and largely unobstructed views. Users of the N15 will continue to experience indirect, oblique views while travelling at speed.

New mitigation planting and the introduction of visitor facilities, integrated with the existing car park, will be absorbed into the immediate area. These elements will sit low in the landscape and not intrude upon the broader scenic significance of Barnesmore Gap in wider views. As a result, the greenway will be absorbed into the local landscape setting.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, long-term (Not Significant).

Table 14-26 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 9

Viewpoint 9 - View from layby off N15 in Barnesmore Gap.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, recreational users		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	High	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, temporary works associated with the greenway may be visible in the mid-ground, particularly where the alignment follows the disused railway line. Given the open nature of the view and the elevated position of the viewpoint, construction plant, fencing, and material storage may be perceptible, though visually contained within the broader scale of the landscape. While construction activity will contrast with the tranquil uplands the nature of works will be localised. The effect will be moderate in scale, short-term and reversible.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the proposed greenway will be aligned with the disused railway corridor, which is currently legible within the landscape. The proposed development will introduce low-key features (e.g. signage, paving and fencing where required), which will be visually recessive and often set within the broader, rugged upland setting of the Bluestack Mountains. From this viewpoint, the greenway will appear as a minor element with limited contrast

against the landform and vegetation. Its integration into the landscape will benefit from topographical containment, strategic alignment, and naturalistic finishes. The expansive scale and scenic quality of the view will remain dominant.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, permanent but small in scale and well-integrated.

Table 14-27 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 10

Viewpoint 10 - Barnesmore Gap Layby and Map Wall

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, recreational users		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	High	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

From this location adjacent to the Barnesmore Gap Map Wall—a rest area and interpretive feature—construction works associated with the greenway may be intermittently visible within the mid-ground, particularly where the route follows the historic railway corridor. Activities such as vegetation clearance, surfacing, and temporary construction access will introduce movement and man-made elements to the valley floor, which may contrast with the otherwise static and expansive views across forestry and upland terrain. However, partial screening by scrub vegetation and the scale of the receiving landscape will help absorb change. The construction works will be temporary and reversible, with a moderate scale of effect during the active period.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

Upon completion, the greenway will be partially visible in the mid-ground, read as a low-key intervention along the historic railway corridor, which already forms a subtle linear element within the valley landscape. The use of naturalistic materials, minimal signage, and limited fencing—with the latter set back or omitted where feasible—will ensure visual harmony with the surrounding landform and forestry backdrop. While the change will be perceptible, particularly to users familiar with the landmark view, the visual composition and scenic integrity of the vista will remain dominant, with dramatic uplands and forestry continuing to define the experience of place.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, permanent but well-integrated and localised.

Table 14-28 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 11

Viewpoint 11 - View southeast from layby off N15.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, recreational users		South-east
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	High	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, activity related to the development of the greenway will be visible within the open bog landscape, particularly where the route follows the edge of the disused railway. Given the expansive nature of the landscape and the limited screening, elements such as machinery, materials, temporary fencing, and disturbed ground will contrast with the undeveloped setting. While overhead lines punctuate the foreground, the construction works would represent an additional visual disruption. Construction activity will result in a moderate scale of effect.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the greenway will introduce a linear element along the route of the disused railway, a discernible feature in the landscape. The scheme's modest scale and low-profile will help the route recede within the open uplands. While some change will be perceptible due to the introduction of the path and associated user

activity, these effects will be minor in scale, particularly given the large scale and consistent character of the landscape. The high-quality views of Lough Mourne will remain intact.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, permanent, low in scale, and well-integrated into the landscape.

Table 14-29 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 12

Viewpoint 12 - View from access track across Lough Mourne

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, outdoor workers, recreational users		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
Very High	High	High (Recreational users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction activity associated with the greenway will be visible at short distance from the water treatment structure on the shore of Lough Mourne, with open and largely unscreened views of ground works, machinery, and construction traffic. Mid-distance views from the N15 will be partly filtered by vegetation, but taller machinery will remain visible. Outdoor workers and recreational users along the shoreline will experience direct and largely unobstructed views of construction. Although the existing road and utilities introduce detracting factors, construction will noticeably increase disturbance in this area. Vehicle users travelling on the N15 will have direct and indirect views, though these will occur at speed and at an oblique angle to the direction of travel.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible (Significant).

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1, outdoor workers and recreational users will continue to have direct, open views of the completed greenway. Users of the N15 will have brief, oblique views while travelling at speed.

The addition of the greenway surface and boundary elements will alter the balance of the immediate view, but the wider context will remain consistent.

Assessment: Slight negative visual effect, long-term and reversible (Not Significant).

Table 14-30 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 13

Viewpoint 13 – Lough Mourne: Designated View and Scenic Corridor

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Vehicle users, outdoor workers,		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
Low	Low	Medium (Vehicle users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase vegetation clearance, material storage, and movement of machinery will be visible along the disused railway. The scrubby bog and tree line offer partial screening but the open view across Lough Mourne means temporary visual disruption could be noticeable from this sensitive location. The area's designation as one of the "views and prospects of special amenity value and interest," as well as its proximity to an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity, heightens the importance of minimising visual intrusion. However, the linear nature and limited width of the construction corridor means the overall effect will be moderate in scale, localised, and reversible.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the greenway will follow the alignment of the disused railway integrating into the existing topography. The route will be visually modest and partially screened by intervening vegetation, including tree lines and scrub. It will introduce a low-level linear element with potential glimpses of path surfacing and users. Due to its location within a designated view of county importance and overlooking an Area of Especially High Scenic

Amenity the greenway has been designed for sensitive alignment. The overall effect will be slight, localised, and will not detract the scenic integrity of the view.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, permanent but low in scale and integrated within the receiving environment.

Table 14-31 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 14

Viewpoint 14 - View from local road along existing track

Receptor Type		Direction of View
vehicle users, outdoor workers		East
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Medium	Medium (Vehicle Users)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, the introduction of plant, fencing, and temporary materials along the disused railway will be perceptible. The berms and mature beech hedgerows on either side of the former line provide a degree of enclosure and visual screening. However, due to the proximity of the viewpoint and the linear nature of the route, there will be intermittent visibility of construction activity and equipment movement, particularly where vegetation must be selectively removed. These effects will be temporary.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the greenway will preserve the linear quality of disused railway tree lined enclosure. The retained beech hedgerows will help the greenway integrate into the landscape. Over time, additional planting and natural recolonisation will further reduce visibility. The route will be visually coherent with the existing landscape pattern and will be perceived as an enhancement by many receptors.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, permanent, low in scale and well-integrated with the surrounding setting.

Table 14-32 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 15

Viewpoint 15 - View from local road along existing track and The Beeches housing estate.

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users,		South-west
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Medium	High (Residents)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, the view from The Beeches will experience intermittent visibility of works. Construction activity including plant movement, fencing, and clearance operations will be partially screened by existing berms and mature hedgerows.

Assessment: Moderate visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In the operational phase, the greenway route will follow the existing former railway corridor and will maintain the tree-lined view. The berms and hedgerows will help to screen the greenway and any associated features such as signage or low-level lighting, ensuring that the character of the residential landscape is largely preserved. From residential properties, glimpses of movement along the path will be perceptible, though tall screening fences should restrict views both to and from the greenway. Over time, new boundary planting and hedgerow reinforcement will further screen and integrate the greenway into the setting.

Assessment: Slight visual effect, permanent, low in scale and well-integrated into the landscape.

Table 14-33 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 16

Viewpoint 16 – View from Navenny Street

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users		North
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Low	High (Residents)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

During the construction phase, visual change from Navenny Street will be limited due to the existing urban edge context and partial screening from built features and vegetation. Construction activity will occur north of the street, around a site currently characterised by a mesh fence, a visible residential property, and remnants of a former river bridge. While temporary works such as machinery movement or clearance may be perceptible, they will not significantly alter the existing visual character, which already includes a degree of disturbance..

Assessment: Slight Negative visual effect, temporary and reversible.

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

During operation, the greenway will pass through the existing residential area north of Navenny Street along the former rail corridor. It will be read as a linear route within an established residential edge, with views largely filtered by existing vegetation, fencing, and buildings. Occasional glimpses of users and path infrastructure will be possible, but overall visibility will be limited.

The Proposed Development will include berms and a refurbished bridge crossing. These elements will be at a higher level than the existing field and disused bridge columns becoming visually prominent in the river's edge landscape. Residential receptors will have a high sensitivity to change the adjoining residence overlooking the bridge crossing will be screened with fencing to prevent overlooking but the fencing will be a dominant visual effect in the view.

Assessment: Moderate Negative Visual Effect, permanent (Significant).

Table 14-34 - Visual Assessment at Representative Viewpoints – Viewpoint 17

Viewpoint 17 – View from The Base Enterprise Centre, Railway Road

Receptor Type		Direction of View
Residents, vehicle users, outdoor workers		South
Visual Susceptibility to Change	Value of View	Sensitivity of Receptors (Worst Case)
High	Low	High (Residents)

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at construction phase

Construction activity will be clearly visible from the Stranorlar Enterprise Centre. Ground works, construction vehicles, and taller machinery will be largely open to view. Trailhead construction east of the viewpoint will introduce additional activity concentrated in this area.

Vehicle and recreational users may experience views of construction, but these will be partly screened by the retained vegetation and often viewed obliquely, reducing their prominence.

Assessment: Moderate negative visual effect, short-term and reversible (Significant).

Size/ scale, duration, and reversibility of impact at operational phase (Year 1)

In Year 1 of operation, the greenway, trailhead facilities, and associated fencing will remain visible at short distance. Residential receptors will experience direct but partially screened views, while outdoor workers will have largely open views of the completed development experiencing a new urban realm with street lighting, street furniture and street trees creating an improved streetscape.

Assessment: Moderate Beneficial visual effect, long-term and reversible (Significant).

14.7 Residual Landscape Effects (Year 15)

14.7.1 Landscape Character Areas (LCA)

By Year 15, following the establishment of extensive mitigation planting and the integration of green infrastructure, the proposed development will result in predominantly neutral to slight positive effects across all identified Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), Seascape Character Areas (SCAs), and Local Townscape Character Areas (LTCAs). Mature native planting and habitat restoration will effectively screen development elements, reduce visual prominence, and enhance biodiversity, while the sensitive design approach ensures the preservation of key landscape and seascape qualities. Urban fringe areas will benefit from regeneration and the introduction of new civic spaces, improving visual cohesion and community amenity. Overall, the development will be well-assimilated into the evolving landscape, maintaining landscape integrity and contributing positively to the local environment and sense of place.

The residual effects are summarised below in Table 14-35.

Table 14-35 - Summary of Residual Landscape Effects

Landscape Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Year 15 Effects of Proposed Development	
County Donegal Landscape Character Areas					
LCA 14: Finn Valley	Medium	Low	Medium	Slight positive effects arising from improved integration of the greenway within the existing landscape structure, with new planting and route design strengthening landscape continuity. No loss of overall landscape character integrity.	
LCA 37: Donegal Bay Drumlins	Medium	Low	Medium	Slight positive effects as new planting and landscape reinstatement enhance visual cohesion while maintaining the established drumlin landscape pattern and character.	
LCA 38: Bluestack (An Gaeltacht)	High	Medium	High	Neutral effects; the route is carefully located and screened, with mature planting reducing visibility and maintaining the existing natural mountain landscape character.	
LCA 39: Lough Eske	Medium	Medium	Medium	Neutral effects; woodland structure and landscape integration measures help maintain existing character without introducing notable change.	
LCA 40: Cashelnavern Border and Uplands	Medium	Low	Medium	Neutral effects as limited visibility and integration with existing infrastructure ensure no material change to upland landscape character.	
LCA 41: Croaghnameal Border and Uplands	High	Medium	High	Neutral effects; existing vegetation and landform continue to screen the development, preserving upland character and long-range scenic views.	
Seascape Character Areas (SCA)					
SCA 19: Donegal Bay / SCA 4: Sligo Bay	High	High	High	No direct effect.	
Local Townscape Character Areas (LTCA)					
Historic Core	Town	High	Low	Medium	Slight positive effects arising from improved public realm and the introduction of structured green infrastructure at settlement edges, contributing to enhanced townscape

Landscape Receptor	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Year 15 Effects of Proposed Development
				quality and legibility without altering core character.
Urban Fringes	Medium	Low	Medium	Slight positive effects resulting from the reorganisation and improvement of underused public areas, introducing better defined routes, planting structure, and public realm enhancements that improve visual quality at the settlement edge.

14.8 Residual Visual Effects (Year 15)

14.8.1 VP1 – View from Tirchonail Street Looking Northeast Towards Railway Park

By Year 15, the proposed trailhead will have established a new civic identity at the town's edge, transforming this transitional urban-fringe area into a vibrant, multifunctional public space. The trailhead will feature a smart, modern plaza with café seating, toilets, and bike facilities, linking directly to the John Bosco Community Centre, the town's playground, the Donegal Railway Museum, and the town centre, supporting active travel, tourism, and daily community life.

The design will blend contemporary materials with natural finishes to ensure the scheme complements its surroundings and serves as a welcoming arrival point to the greenway.

Residual Effect: **Moderate and Beneficial** (significant). Marked improvement to the public realm and town-fringe character through landscape-led urban regeneration.

14.8.2 VP2 – View from Pathway Opposite St. Agatha's Church Carpark, Looking Northwest

By Year 15, the greenway corridor visible from the N15 across from Clar Church will be largely assimilated into the surrounding landscape due to the establishment of new native hedgerows and structural planting. These features will reinforce traditional field boundaries and provide effective visual screening of the greenway route from the road and Church car park. The alignment, which will follow existing field margins and avoid elevated or exposed landforms, will continue to appear as a linear element in the view.

The visual pattern of hedgerows, scrub, and farmland will remain dominant. Although the greenway will introduce a permanent change to the landscape, by Year 15 the effect will be fully integrated, with visual mitigation measures well established and functioning as intended.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Neutral** (not significant). The greenway will be perceived as a modest and well-assimilated feature within a rural landscape context.

14.8.3 VP3 – View from Carlougheask Road, Looking Northwest Across Fields

By Year 15, views from the Carlougheask Road (L65351) toward the greenway will be significantly softened by the successful establishment of new native hedgerows and intermittent tree planting along field boundaries. The route will appear as a low-lying, linear feature that follows existing field boundaries and avoids elevated or visually prominent alignments.

Due to the topography and existing vegetation, the proposed bridge crossing at the low point in this view will be visually recessive. The bridge will remain barely visible or only glimpsed through retained vegetation. Views from the opposite side of the river valley will find the bridge imperceptible.

Residual effect – **Slight and Negative** (not significant). The proposed development will sit comfortably within the rural field pattern and landscape character, with the bridge crossing well integrated and visually contained.

14.8.4 VP4 – View from Track, Looking Northwest Towards Lough Eske Castle

By Year 15, landscape mitigation particularly woodland edge planting and natural regeneration will have matured to restore a sense of enclosure and continuity along the forest trail where it intersects with the greenway. The trailhead infrastructure will be softened by vegetation, and built elements such as signage and seating will remain modest in scale, using natural materials that blend with the woodland context.

Although the setting will have changed from a purely forestry environment to a shared recreational corridor with car parking and trailhead facilities, these will be integrated within an existing clearing. Mature trees surrounding the viewpoint will continue to limit outward views, and the greenway will appear as a linear feature embedded within the woodland structure.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). While the intervention will be visually assimilated over time, the introduction of vehicular access and parking will add a level of activity not previously present.

14.8.5 VP5 – View from Pier at Harvey's Point.

By Year 15, the greenway will be visually integrated into the landscape surrounding Lough Eske, with new native hedgerows along the route maturing to provide effective screening from this long-distance viewpoint. The enhanced vegetation will soften views of the trail infrastructure, ensuring it remains a subtle linear feature within the wider lakeside panorama.

The trail and any associated infrastructure visible from this viewpoint will be modest in scale. The existing character of the shoreline, woodland, and distant mountains will remain the dominant visual focus.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Neutral** (not significant). The greenway will be perceived as a discreet addition to the high-quality scenic setting, maintaining the valued character of the Harvey's Point vista.

14.8.6 VP6 – View from Lough Eske Bridge

By Year 15, native woodland planting along the greenway corridor near Lough Eske Bridge will have matured to form a robust vegetative screen to views from the inland roads and properties in the vicinity. However, this will not obscure views of the greenway infrastructure from the bridge and nearby receptors, as the Proposed Development will be visible where it follows the shoreline. Because the greenway will cross over the existing bridge there will be no effect to views of the bridge structure.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). The greenway will be well integrated into the landscape but visible along the shoreline with increased activity from users altering the perceived tranquillity of the view as it runs adjacent to the Lough Eske shore and over the existing bridge.

14.8.7 VP7 – View from Field Entrance Adjacent to Mullanalamphry Road, Overlooking N15

By Year 15, new native hedgerow and woodland planting along the greenway corridor near this viewpoint will have matured to form a continuous vegetative screen. This will soften views of the greenway infrastructure from the local road and designated scenic viewpoint, integrating the route within the existing landscape.

The greenway will appear as a narrow linear feature following field boundaries, with associated built elements such as timber fencing being visually recessive using natural materials and muted colours.

Residual Effect: **Imperceptible** (not significant). The greenway will be visible in places but integrated into this high-value landscape, preserving the scenic quality of this regionally important view.

14.8.8 VP8 – View from Carpark in Front of Biddy's O'Barnes Restaurant

By Year 15, peripheral planting around the proposed trailhead will have matured sufficiently to soften the visual effects of the new car parking, toilets, and greenway bridge over the river. New picnic benches will not look incongruous adjacent to the retained gazebo and managed grassland in front of Biddy's O'Barnes Pub. Vegetation will separate the new parking from the existing pub parking, preventing a cumulative impact that would significantly affect views of the scenic mountain gap to the north.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). The development will be visually softened and largely integrated into the landscape.

14.8.9 VP9 – View from Layby off N15 in Barnesmore Gap

By Year 15, the greenway alignment along the former railway corridor will be well integrated into the rugged upland landscape of the Bluestack Mountains. Native vegetation will soften the appearance of the trail. The greenway will remain a linear element on the valley side, with limited visual contrast against the surrounding landform and vegetation.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). The greenway will appear as a discreet, well-assimilated feature within the upland valley setting, with only the increased level of activity from recreational users distinguishing potential changes to the landscape setting and views.

14.8.10 VP10 – Barnesmore Gap Layby and Map Wall

By Year 15, the greenway will be well integrated along the former railway corridor that follows the edge of Barnesmore Gap. The greenway will appear as a subtle, linear feature on the valley side, harmonising with the existing landscape patterns of forestry and upland terrain. Existing vegetation screening around the layby and interpretive Map Wall will partially screen the location of the proposed development preserving the scenic integrity of the dramatic upland vista.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Neutral** (not significant). The greenway will be barely perceivable as a low-key, well-assimilated addition to the established Barnesmore Gap landscape.

14.8.11 VP11 – View Southeast from Layby off N15

By Year 15, the greenway will be fully integrated into the open bog and upland landscape along the former railway corridor. Low-profile route will not be fenced and combined with mature native planting, will soften the linear route, helping it recede visually within the expansive, flat moorland setting. The path will continue to follow the existing corridor, avoiding visually prominent structures and maintaining the openness and distinctive character of the Lough Mourne landscape. Residual human activity and minor infrastructure will appear subtle and harmonious within this high-quality regional view.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). The greenway will be a discreet and well-assimilated addition to the valued landscape.

14.8.12 VP12 – View from Access Track Across Lough Mourne

By Year 15, the proposed trailhead and greenway infrastructure will be visually softened by the establishment of native planting and natural regeneration around the site. While elements such as parking, path surfacing, and modest facilities will remain visible from the shoreline and local road, these will appear consistent with the modified, semi-industrial setting that includes the water treatment structure and the N15 corridor. From the N15, the greenway will remain a secondary element in the view, largely screened or viewed obliquely. The maturing vegetation will help reintegrate the development into the lakeside setting without significantly altering the expansive or scenic quality of the view.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** (not significant). Although some infrastructure will remain visible, its visual effect will be reduced and harmonised within the existing landscape context.

14.8.13 VP13 – Lough Mourne: Designated View and Scenic Corridor

By Year 15, the greenway will be further assimilated into the landscape as native vegetation and scrub establish along the former railway corridor. This maturing cover will help to filter views of the path and occasional users, particularly from the designated scenic viewpoint. The narrow, linear character of the greenway will remain visually modest, with naturalistic finishes and limited infrastructure avoiding visual intrusion. The broader composition of the view—centred on Lough Mourne, open moorland, and surrounding uplands – will continue to dominate, with the greenway read as a minor, well-integrated landscape element.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Neutral** (not significant). The greenway will preserve the scenic character of this sensitive landscape and designated view, with only a subtle influence on the visual experience.

14.8.14 VP14 – View from Local Road Along Existing Track

By Year 15, the greenway will be fully integrated into the linear corridor formed by the former railway line, with the mature beech hedgerows and existing berms continuing to provide strong containment and visual screening. Regrowth and supplementary planting will further soften the appearance of the greenway, reducing the visibility of the path surface and any incidental features such as signage. The formal, tree-lined character of the view will be preserved, with the greenway perceived as a subtle and contextually appropriate element within the semi-rural landscape.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Neutral** (not significant). The route will maintain and reinforce the existing landscape structure, with minimal effect on the visual amenity of nearby receptors.

14.8.15 VP15 – View from Local Road Along Existing Track and The Beeches Housing Estate

By Year 15, the greenway will be fully integrated into the existing former railway corridor. Mature beech hedgerows and berms will continue to provide strong containment, with mitigation measures including timber panel screen fencing, 2.0m tall (or as required) installed for immediately adjacent residential properties. As a result, changes will primarily relate to increased enclosure rather than direct views of the greenway itself. For these close-proximity receptors, the introduction of user activity along the route will slightly alter the perception of tranquillity. However, for the wider residential and recreational context, the route will remain visually recessive and consistent with the formal, tree-lined setting, supported by maturing vegetation and reinforced boundary planting.

Residual Effect: **Slight and Negative** for immediately adjacent residential receptors due to increased activity and enclosure. Neutral for the wider area. Not Significant overall.

14.8.16 VP16 – View from Navenny Street

By Year 15, the greenway will be well assimilated into the transitional urban-rural landscape at Navenny Street. The alignment, surfacing, and associated features will remain modest in scale, while maturing planting and retained boundary features will continue to provide effective visual containment. The refurbishment of the disused railway bridge – long a derelict structure – will enhance the sense of place and contribute positively to the visual coherence of the setting. Although glimpses of greenway users may be perceptible, these will be in keeping with the semi-urban context and will support a strengthened visual connection between town and countryside.

Residual Effect: **Neutral**. Not Significant.

14.8.17 VP17 – View from The Base Enterprise Centre

By Year 15, the proposed trailhead adjacent to the Enterprise Centre will have established as a vibrant and fully integrated public space. Extensive mitigation planting, including native hedgerows and woodland blocks, will frame a new landscape public realm accommodating parking for over 100 vehicles, a toilet block, café with sheltered seating, and cycle facilities. Views from the Enterprise Centre will be entirely transformed, shifting from underutilised

pasture to an active and well-designed civic space that extends the urban edge and enhances connectivity between the Enterprise and Leisure Centres.

The design – characterised by natural materials, modest building scale, and layered planting – will be both visually appealing and functionally positive, reinforcing the town's green infrastructure network and encouraging social and recreational use.

Residual Effect: **Moderate and Positive.** Significant in terms of beneficial townscape regeneration.

Table 14-36 - Year 15 Residual Visual Effects Table

Viewpoint	Year 1 Effect	Proposed Mitigation	Year 15 Residual Effect	Commentary
VP1 – View from Tirchonaiill Street looking northeast towards Railway Park	Slight Beneficial	Streetscape trees, lighting, paving, street furniture, visitor facilities	Moderate and Beneficial (Significant)	Establishes a new civic identity, enhances public realm, links town centre and greenway, landscaped urban regeneration.
VP2 – View from pathway opposite St. Agatha's Church carpark, looking northwest.	Slight Negative	New native hedgerows, structural planting, visually recessive signage/fencing	Slight and Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway largely assimilated, linear feature integrated within field boundaries, visual mitigation effective.
VP3 – View from Carlogheask road, looking northwest across fields	Slight to Moderate Negative	New native hedgerows, tree planting, natural/dark-toned bridge materials	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway visually contained, bridge barely perceptible, sits comfortably within rural field pattern.
VP4 – View from track, looking northwest towards Lough Eske Castle.	Moderate Negative	Woodland edge planting, natural regeneration, modest signage and furniture	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Trailhead infrastructure softened by vegetation, intervention visually assimilated, minor activity added.
VP5 – View from pier at Harvey's Point.	Imperceptible to Slight Negative	Native hedgerows and woodland planting, natural material path	Slight and Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway discreet, trail infrastructure visually recessive, high-quality scenic setting maintained.
VP6 – View from Lough Eske Bridge	Slight Negative	Native woodland planting along corridor	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway narrow linear element, infrastructure visible but integrated, some user activity altering tranquillity.
VP7 – View from field entrance adjacent to Mullanalamphry Road, overlooking N15	Slight Negative	Native hedgerow and woodland planting, recessive fencing / signage	Imperceptible (Not Significant)	Greenway visually integrated, narrow linear feature, preserves scenic quality of high-value landscape.
VP8 – View from carpark in front of Biddy's O'Barnes restaurant	Slight Negative	Peripheral planting, picnic benches integrated with pub and grassland	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway visually softened, car park and facilities integrated, scenic mountain gap preserved.
VP9 –	Slight Negative	Native vegetation, naturalistic finishes	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway subtle linear feature, limited visual

Viewpoint	Year 1 Effect	Proposed Mitigation	Year 15 Residual Effect	Commentary
View from layby off N15 in Barnesmore Gap				contrast, upland scenic quality dominant.
VP10 – Barnesmore Gap Layby and Map Wall	Slight Negative	Native planting, naturalistic materials, minimal fencing	Slight and Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway low-key, harmonises with forestry and upland terrain, scenic integrity preserved.
VP11 – View southeast from layby off N15.	Slight Negative	Low-profile surfacing, naturalistic treatments, mature native planting	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway visually discreet, follows corridor, maintains openness and character of landscape.
VP12 – View from access track across Lough Mourne	Slight Negative	Native planting and natural regeneration, modest parking/facilities	Slight and Negative (Not Significant)	Greenway visually softened, integrated into lakeside context, infrastructure visible but harmonious.
VP13 – Lough Mourne: Designated View and Scenic Corridor	Slight Negative	Native vegetation and scrub along corridor, naturalistic finishes	Slight and Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway narrow linear feature, visually modest, preserves scenic character of designated view.
VP14 – View from local road along existing track	Slight Negative	Mature beech hedgerows, berms, supplementary planting	Slight and Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway fully integrated, subtle and contextually appropriate, minimal visual effect.
VP15 – View from local road along existing track and The Beeches housing estate.	Slight Negative	Screen fencing for nearby properties, reinforced boundary planting	Slight and Negative (immediate receptors) / Neutral (wider area)	Greenway visually recessive, formal tree-lined character preserved, minor perceptual change for adjacent residents.
VP16 – View from Navenny Street	Slight Negative	Retained boundary features, maturing planting, refurbished railway bridge	Neutral (Not Significant)	Greenway well assimilated, strengthens visual connection between town and countryside, modest scale.
VP17 – View from The Base Enterprise Centre	Moderate Beneficial	Extensive mitigation planting, native hedgerows, woodland blocks, parking, café, cycle facilities	Moderate and Beneficial (Significant)	Trailhead fully integrated, vibrant public space, townscape regeneration, enhances connectivity and green infrastructure.

14.9 Summary of Significant Landscape and Visual Impacts

By Year 15 the LVIA demonstrates that the proposed development will become successfully integrated into the receiving landscape following the establishment of the mitigation planting. Native woodland, hedgerow and natural regeneration, together with sensitive alignment and design of the greenway route, will substantially reduce the visibility and prominence of the proposed development across the study area.

The landscape assessment establishes that residual landscape effects across all Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) and Local Townscape Character Areas (LTCAs) will be neutral to slight positive by Year 15. The proposed Greenway will

preserve the distinctive landscape character of the upland, drumlin, lakeside and settlement landscapes through which it passes. In particular, urban fringe and settlement-edge areas within Donegal Town and Stranorlar will benefit from landscape regeneration, improved accessibility and enhanced green infrastructure.

The visual assessment similarly demonstrates that the majority of visual effects identified during the earlier stages of the assessment will reduce to Slight or Neutral and Not Significant at Year 15 as planting matures and the Greenway becomes integrated into the established landscape pattern. Views from rural roads, scenic lay-bys, lakeside settings and upland viewpoints will generally experience only minor change by year 15.

Where moderate adverse visual effects (significant) were identified during construction and year 1 stages, these effects reduce over time to slight adverse or neutral residual effects (not significant) following mitigation establishment. The notable exception relates to trailhead locations, including VP1 and VP17, where moderate beneficial significant effects are predicted due to the creation of public realm, enhanced connectivity and the delivery of landscape-led regeneration benefits.

Overall, the Year 15 residual assessment concludes that the Barnesmore Gap Greenway can be accommodated within the receiving landscape without giving rise to significant adverse long-term landscape or visual effects.

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