

13. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

13.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Hodson Bay Waterfront Park (“Proposed Development”) located in Barrymore, Co. Roscommon. This LVIA assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual amenity. This LVIA was informed by desktop studies and receptor mapping, onsite visibility appraisal, the production and analysis of verified photomontages, and follows impact assessment methodology based on best practice guidance for LVIA. This LVIA also includes the assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects. This chapter contains a section on visual impact assessment of verified photomontages captured at selected viewpoints and is supported by two appendices:

- **Appendix 13-1, LVIA Methodology:** An appendix detailing the methodology and guidance used for the assessments reported in this chapter.
- **Appendix 13-2, Photomontage Booklet:** A1 banner photomontage booklet presenting verified photomontage visualisations from representative viewpoints.

13.1.1 Statement of Authority

MKO has developed extensive expertise and experience over the last 20 years in the LVIA of large-scale infrastructure developments across a diverse range of project types including renewable energy and grid infrastructure; residential developments; transport infrastructure; extraction infrastructure; and a range of other projects. This LVIA was written by Rachel Smith and reviewed by Maciej Skiba.

Rachel Smith is a Project Environmental Scientist – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Specialist who has been working with MKO since October 2023, with a University Certificate of Study (NFQ Level 9 Minor Award) in LVIA from the University of Limerick, a specialist postgraduate qualification developed specifically for professionals undertaking LVIA. Rachel is an Earth & Environmental Science consultant with more than 12 years of professional experience in producing and editing technical scientific reports, and collecting, analysing and reporting environmental data for regulatory compliance in both the US and Ireland, including the utilisation of QGIS mapping, organisation of field work, management of environmental databases and training of environmental science staff. Rachel's primary role at MKO is producing and reviewing the LVIA chapter of EIA reports accompanying planning applications for multi-scale onshore renewable energy and non-energy developments, as well as conducting research and analysis in national-level Irish landscape science and policy. Rachel is an affiliate of Landscape Alliance Ireland assisting with the Landscape Forum in 2025 and 2026 and has presented on topics related to LVIA at Irish universities since 2025. Rachel is a member of the Irish Geological Association as well as ProGeo, the International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage. Rachel holds an MSc. in Coastal and Marine Environments (Physical Processes, Policies & Practice) and a BSc. in Geology specialised in Hydrogeology.

Maciej Skiba MSc. Eng. CMLI MILI is a Senior Landscape Architect, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (UK) and a Corporate Member of the Irish Landscape Institute. Maciej has over 18 years of experience working in award winning multi-disciplinary practices, on projects in Ireland, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates. His experience spans across a wide range of Landscape Architectural projects including LVIA's for residential and Strategic Infrastructure projects on the island of Ireland as well as design of Open Spaces, Park and Play Areas, Public Realm, Streetscape and Townscape Improvements, Masterplanning, Tourism & Heritage, Residential, Commercial and Mixed-Use developments.

13.1.2 In-Text Reference to the Proposed Development with regard to LVIA

The following references are used throughout this LVIA as per the definitions set out in Chapter 1 “Introduction” of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR):

- **“Proposed Development”** refers to all the project components described in detail in Chapter 4 “Description” of this EIAR.
- **“Proposed Development site”** refers to the primary EIAR Study Area for the development, as mapped in Figure 1-1 of Chapter 1 of this EIAR. In the maps of this LVIA, the site is mapped as the “Planning Application Boundary.”

The above-mentioned key aspects of the Proposed Development are considered to have differing levels of potential for giving rise to landscape and visual effects, and the essential aspects under consideration in this LVIA are discussed below in Section 13.1.4:

- **“Water Sports Pavilion Development”** or “Water Sports Pavilion” refers to the water sports redevelopment aspect as described below in the next Section 13.1.3 Proposed Development Description, as well as in Section 4.3.1 of Chapter 4 “Description” of this EIAR.
- **“Marina Redevelopment and Extension”** refers to the marina aspect of the development as described below and in Section 4.3.2 of Chapter 4.
- **“Public Realm Upgrades”** refers to the new areas of public recreation use and extensive landscaping as described below and in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4.
- **“Active Travel and Site Access Improvements”** refers to the upgrades and works carried out on L2020 Local Road as described below and in Section 4.3.4 and Section 4.3.5 of Chapter 4.
- **“Ancillary Infrastructure”** refers to the areas ancillary works comprising surface-level changes and other visible elements including golf-stop netting as described below and in Section 4.3.8 of Chapter 4.

13.1.3 Proposed Development Description

A detailed description of the Proposed Development can be found in Chapter 4 of this EIAR. The key redevelopment aspects will comprise of:

- **Water Sports Pavilion:** Demolition of the existing water sports building on site, and temporary relocation of Baysports water sports facility to provide for the construction of a new Water Sports Pavilion which includes a multi-use canopy (demountable, intended for seasonal use) and plaza space including a café and terrace and maintains the existing slipway and pontoon.
- **Marina Redevelopment and Extension:** Redevelopment of the existing Waterways operated marina (Hodson Bay Marina) including an upgraded breakwater and jetty to increase marina capacity to approximately 59 berths.
- **Public Realm Upgrades:** Construction of a playground, nature observation space, picnic areas, benches, bicycle storage & service areas, wellness meadow, outdoor changing shelter and events spaces including the development of a continuous promenade pathway along the lakeshore along with secondary connection path.
- **Active Travel and Site Access Improvements:** Alterations and upgrade to the L2020 Local Road to include to provide for a 3m wide shared cycle / pedestrian pathway along the length of the L2020 from the N61 National Road junction to the Hodson Bay Marina; Implementation of traffic calming measures along the L2020 Local Road accessing the site including vertical deflection ramps & raised crossings at key pedestrian crossing locations. Creation of a pedestrian priority environment resulting in the re-location of 57 no. car parking spaces from the lakefront areas to improve landscape and visual context of the site. Alterations to existing car parking and provision of new carparking at Hodson Bay (increase from 353 no. parking spaces to 509 no. parking spaces currently shared among the Hodson Bay Marina, Hodson Bay Hotel and Baysports).
- **Ancillary Infrastructure:** The Proposed Development includes for all associated ancillary site development infrastructure including site clearance, boundary treatments, associated public lighting, electrical substation, bin storage, hard and soft landscaping, site drainage upgrades, connections to existing utilities to include foul and surface water drainage, water supply, electrical & telecommunications networks. Boundary treatments involve upgrades to the existing golf course boundary safety netting (between 3m to 20m in height) and fencing in sections where the boundary is altered to accommodate the proposed development and maintain public safety.

Of these five key aspects, the Water Sports Pavilion, the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, and the Public Realm Upgrades have the greatest potential to give rise to landscape and visual effects and are considered the focus of this LVIA. Examples of architect drawings and computer-generated imagery (CGI) illustrations are given below in Figure 13-1 through Figure 13-8, and these aspects are discussed further as the essential aspects of this LVIA, in Section 13.1.4 below. The remaining aspects of the L2020 Local Road works, extended parking areas and ancillary works and infrastructure are also considered and assessed in the LVIA.

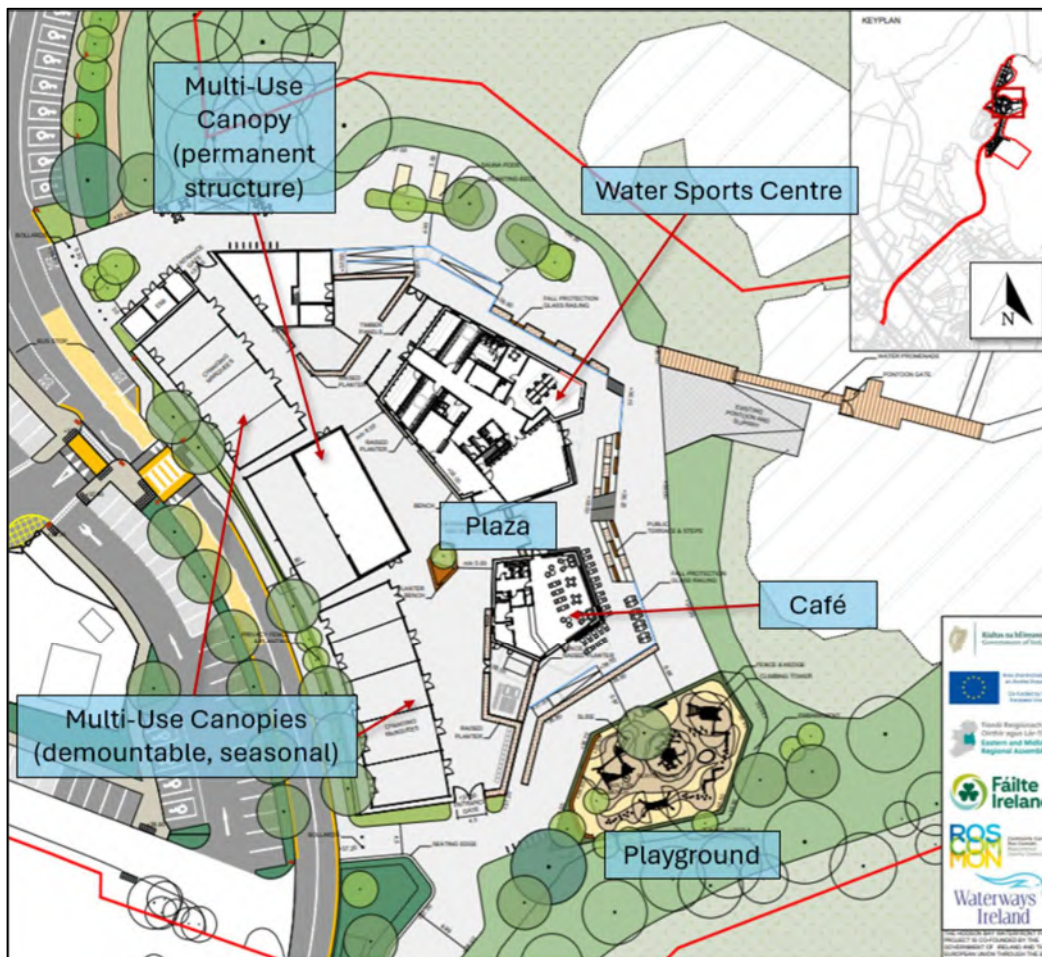


Figure 13-1 Plan view drawing of proposed Water Sports Pavilion, extracted and modified from drawing no. HBWP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-OKR-LA-001104



Figure 13-2 3D render of proposed Water Sports Pavilion facing north, extracted from architect site plans



Figure 13-3 3D render of proposed Water Sports Pavilion facing southwest, extracted from architect site plans



Figure 13-4 Site sections of proposed Water Sports Pavilion, extracted from architect site plans

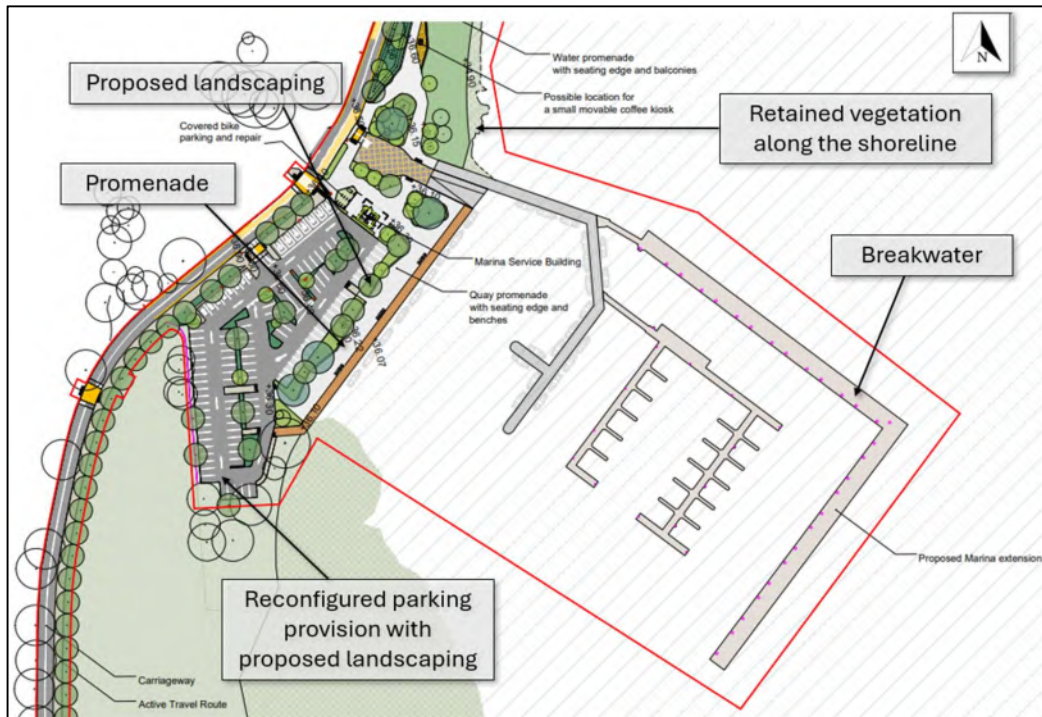


Figure 13-5 Plan layout of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, extracted and modified from drawing no. HBWP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-OKR-LA-001100

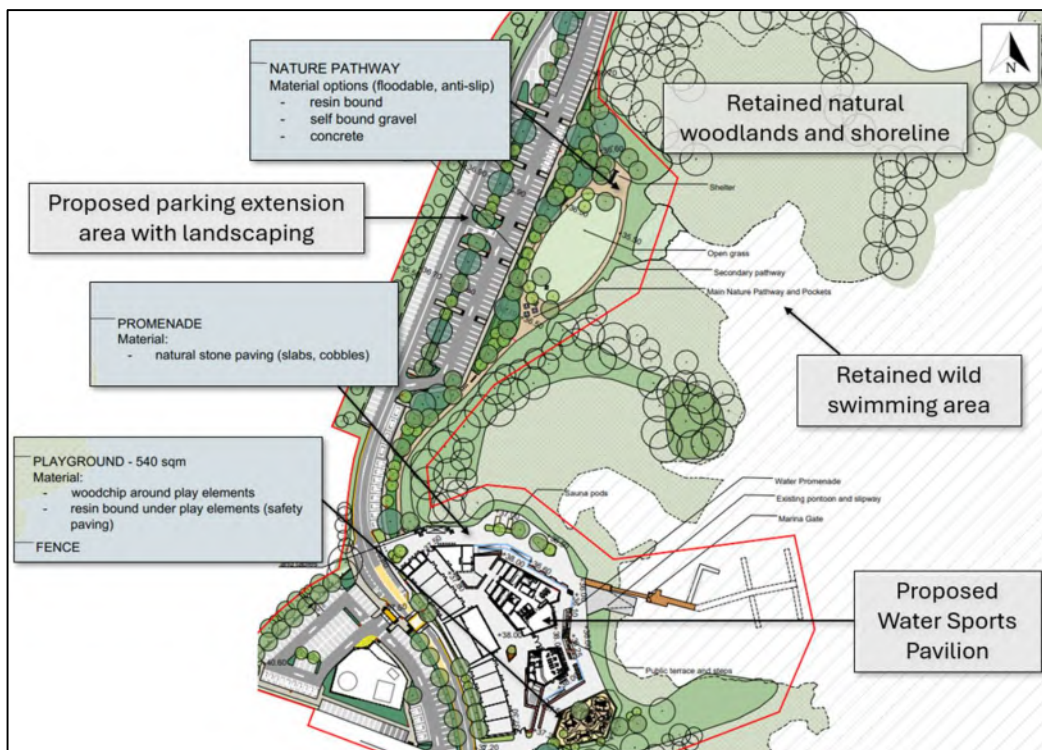
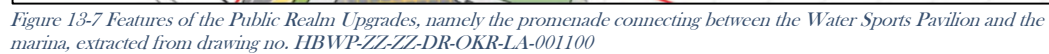


Figure 13-6 Features of the proposed Public Realm Upgrades, proposed landscaping and retained natural woodlands at the north end of the Proposed Development site, extracted and modified from drawing no. HBWP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-OKR-LA-001100



Essential Aspects of the Proposed Development from an LVIA Perspective

13-6

Aspects of GLVIA3: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2024-01” (hereafter, LI TGN 24-01) published by LI (2024). The GLVIA3 states that:

“It is important to make sure that the project description provides all the information needed to identify its effects on particular aspects of the environment. For LVIA it is important to understand, from the project description, the essential aspects of the scheme that will potentially give rise to its effects on the landscape and visual amenity.”

Of the five key aspects of the Proposed Development outlined above, the Water Sports Pavilion, the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, and the Public Realm Upgrades have the greatest potential to give rise to landscape and visual effects and are considered the focus of the LVIA for the following reasons.

The Proposed Development is integrated with, and lies alongside, the shoreline of Hodson Bay, located in the southwest of Lough Ree, south of Yew Point/Hodson Bay Peninsula. The site forms part of an established recreational and tourism hub on the shores of Lough Ree. Below Hodson Bay, the southern outlet of Lough Ree feeds into the Shannon River Corridor. Hodson Bay and its landscape setting are valued for their recreational qualities, scenic views, and contribution to the area's tourism amenity. This is particularly evident in relation to the hotel and its associated amenity areas, as well as the public recreational areas immediately adjacent to and within the bay. Hodson Bay, Lough Ree and the Shannon River Corridor are all subject to local planning policies and objectives that seek to protect and guide development in order to preserve their landscape character, visual amenity and recreational value within County Roscommon.

This LVIA therefore focuses on the key aspects of the Water Sports Pavilion and the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, which constitute the largest footprints of change within the Proposed Development site, and which are highly integrated with the shoreline and within the shallow water environment of Hodson Bay/Lough Ree/Shannon River Corridor. In addition, the LVIA considers the extensive landscape works associated with the Public Realm Upgrades aspect of the Proposed Development, which would result in material changes to the appearance of the wider shoreline areas to the north and south of the water sports and marina sites. Additional aspects of the Proposed Development which constitute surface-level changes and other visible elements are also given due consideration and assessment in the LVIA; these include the Active Travel and Site Access Improvements along L2020 Local Road and the extension of the existing parking provision located at the north end of the site, the ball-stop netting up to 20m in height installed in multiple locations and the temporary cofferdam installed as part of the Water Sports Pavilion to facilitate construction works there.

13.1.5 Mitigation by Design

Mitigation, remedial, and avoidance measures have been integral in the design of the Proposed Development with regard to landscape and visual effects. All efforts have been made to ensure that the Proposed Development is designed to effectively assimilate with the existing landscape setting and character at the shoreline of Lough Ree and Yew Point. From a visual impact assessment perspective, the design of the Proposed Development, where possible, avoids obstruction of open views looking out across Lough Ree from the shore and also avoids interrupting recreational amenities at Hodson Bay. Particular consideration has been given to the location, scale, massing and height of all above-ground infrastructure with the potential to interrupt or obstruct valued scenic views from viewpoints and publicly accessible locations immediately west of the Proposed Development; namely at the site of Hodson Bay Hotel. While there are no protected views within Hodson Bay itself, where possible, the above-ground infrastructure (e.g. proposed buildings) have been strategically positioned to ensure they are effectively integrated into the landscape and do not obstruct views of the lake. This was achieved, for example, by availing of areas where visual obstruction of the lake already exists, such as areas of existing mature woodland in the north of the Proposed Development site.

Details of the various layout iterations included as part of the design process are included in Chapter 3 “Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives” of this EIAR and the landscape and visual “mitigating” factors of key relevance to the LVIA are set out below.

- **Maintaining Existing Scenic Views of Hodson Bay/Lough Ree where possible.** The layout and design of the Proposed Development allow for retention of very-high-value existing scenic views looking towards Hodson Bay and Lough Ree from publicly accessible

shoreline locations in the vicinity of the Water Sports Pavilion and the Hodson Bay Marina.

- **Preservation of Scenic Lake Views from the Hodson Bay Hotel.** The proposed landscape works along the central shoreline of the site maintain scenic water views from the hotel in the vicinity of viewpoint location VP4 (see Appendix 13-2 Photomontage Booklet). New landscape works are proposed for the section of public realm adjacent to this part of the shoreline and it has been flagged that the existing lake views from the hotel should not be obstructed.
- **Creation of New Scenic Views of Hodson Bay/Lough Ree.** The Proposed Development allows for new opportunity to experience scenic views towards Hodson Bay and Lough Ree from the waterfront terrace of the Water Sports Pavilion as well as along the promenade and from other elements of the Public Realm Upgrades.
- **New Infrastructure within Same Footprint of Existing Infrastructure.** The primary aspects of the development, including the Water Sports Pavilion, the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, and the Public Realm Upgrades are to be carried out as improvements to existing infrastructure spaces within the same footprint, thereby ensuring that no new landscape areas will undergo substantial change.
- **Retention of Wild Swimming Area and Woodlands.** The Proposed Development includes for retention of the landscape/shoreline area in the north of the site, currently used for wild swimming and lake recreation, which preserves existing mature woodland and the shoreline environment as a natural area and also creates new access and recreation through the addition of a nature pathway and changing canopy. The retention of this wild area allows for natural attenuation of floodwaters during periods of higher lake levels.
- **Improved Flood Safety.** The siting of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion, with its associated buildings including the café, canopy and plaza above the flood level, ensures the safe and sustainable operation of these recreational amenities during periods of higher lake levels.
- **Improved Access and Safety for Non-Motorists.** Facilitation of non-motorist access along the full length of L2020 Local Road, including road-widening where needed to ensure space for dual-carriageway and a dual-use pedestrian / cycle pathway.
- **Replacement of Mature Trees along L2020 Access Road.** The Proposed Development includes for new semi-mature planting along the L2020 Local Road, to replace mature trees required to be removed to facilitate the proposed widening of the pedestrian / cycle path.
- **Construction Phase Mitigation.** Landscape and visual effects during the Construction Phase will be managed through best practice site management techniques. Temporary hoardings will be designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding environment, and lighting will be minimised to reduce night-time visual effects. Strategic phasing of construction works will minimise the duration of landscape and visual effects arising within localised areas of the Proposed Development site during the Construction Phase.

13.2

Brief Methodology and Assessment Criteria

This section broadly outlines the guidance and methodology used to undertake the LVIA of the Proposed Development; a more detailed description of the methodology is provided in Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology. The main sections of the LVIA reported in this chapter are:

- Landscape Baseline:
 - Policy context – relevant landscape and visual policies and designations in local planning policy documents.
 - Landscape character and sensitivity of the Proposed Development site - informed by desk study and onsite visibility appraisal.
 - Landscape character of the wider landscape setting of Hodson Bay as a component of Lough Ree / Yew Point / Shannon River Corridor.
- Visual Baseline:
 - Overview of potential visibility of the Proposed Development.
 - Identification of visual receptors scoped in for impact assessment.
 - Selection of photomontage viewpoints, VP1-VP8.
- Cumulative Baseline:

- Overview of cumulative developments identified in the LVIA Study Area which have the potential to give rise to cumulative landscape or visual effects in combination with the Proposed Development.
- Photomontage Visual Impact Assessment Tables:
 - Presents the individual impact assessment tables for each photomontage viewpoint VP1-VP8.
 - To be read in conjunction with Appendix 13-2 Photomontage Booklet.
- Likely Significant Landscape and Visual Effects:
 - Summary of assessment outcomes reported in the visual impact assessment of photomontages VP1-VP8.
 - Reporting of predicted landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development during the Construction and Operational Phases of the project.
 - Discussion of potential cumulative impacts with the cumulative development(s) identified in the Cumulative Baseline.

13.2.1 LVIA Guidance

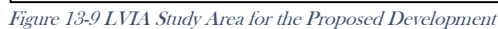
Regarding legislation and general guidance on overall Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), please refer to Chapter 1 of this EIAR. The methods and processes used for the LVIA reported in this chapter were guided and informed by benchmark best practice guidance specifically pertaining to LVIA. Details of the guidance used to conduct this LVIA are outlined in Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology.

13.2.2 Scope and Definition of the LVIA Study Area

The GLVIA3 (LI & IEMA, 2013) (p.70) refers to the identification of the area of landscape that is to be covered while assessing landscape and visual effects. The guidelines state:

“The study areas should include the Site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner.”

For this LVIA, the initial baseline assessment including review of designations in the wider landscape, considered a study area extending 7.5 km from the site boundaries. However, following review of the final design of the Proposed Development, the visual containment within Hodson Bay and the limited extent of landscape and visual change likely to arise from a development of this nature at greater distances, the study area was refined to 1.8 km. This revised study area more appropriately reflects the geographic extent within which significant landscape and visual effects could reasonably be anticipated in the context of the EIA.



13.2.3 Assessment of Potential Impacts

13-10

13.3 Landscape Baseline

13.3.1 Landscape Policy Context

The Proposed Development is located in Co. Roscommon, therefore the Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2022-2028 was consulted for landscape and sensitivity designations and policy objectives relating to landscape and visual factors, as set out below.

13.3.1.1 Landscape Value

The RCDP 2022-2028 Landscape Character Assessment, Section 4.3.3 assigns four “Landscape Value” classifications to all landscape areas of Co. Roscommon:

- Exception Value,
- **Very High Value** – Proposed Development is located within this category,
- High Value,
- Moderate Value.

The Proposed Development is located within an area of “Very High Value” due to its setting along the waterfront of Hodson Bay. Policy objectives relating to proposal of developments in landscapes of Very High Value classification include:

The RCDP Section 10.13 includes the following policy in relation to landscape value:

“It is a Policy of Roscommon County Council to:

NH 10.25: *Minimise visual impacts on areas categorised within the County Roscommon Landscape Character Assessment including “moderate value,” “high value,” “very high value” and with special emphasis on areas classified as “exceptional value” and where deemed necessary, require the use of Visual Impact Assessment where proposed development may have significant effect on such designated areas.”*

13.3.1.2 Green Belt Area: Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan

The RCDP Chapter 4 Area Plans (p.166) reports policy objectives on local development of the Hodson Bay/Barrymore area and shorelines of Lough Ree which are focused on the biodiversity-related considerations of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), but which also have cross-over in terms of landscape and visual considerations. The specific assessment of NHAs and SACs is not conducted in the LVIA; see Chapter 6 “Biodiversity” of this EIAR for considerations of ecological factors.

The Hodson Bay/Barrymore Plan Area contains “Greenbelt Area” landscape designations (see Figure 13-10 below) which fall within the Proposed Development site and carry the following local policy objectives relevant to landscape and visual assessment:

HB 8: *Maintain greenbelt lands as a visual and environmental buffer to preserve the natural amenity of the area such as alongside waterways, rivers and floodplains.*

HB 9: *Protect greenbelt lands from inappropriate developments which would give rise to an negative impact upon the receiving environment and/or undermine the biodiversity/ landscape or amenity value of the area.”*

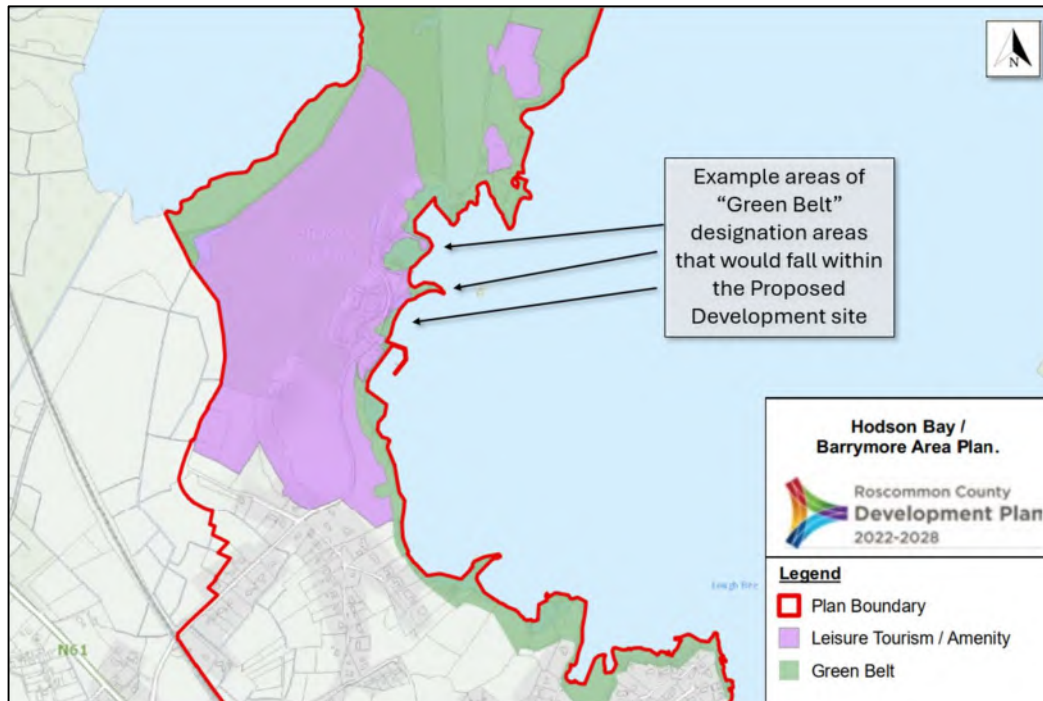


Figure 13-10 “Green Belt” areas that would fall within the Proposed Development site, modified from Map HB1 RCDP 2022-2028 (p.169)

13.3.1.3 Protected Views and Scenic Routes

The RCDP 2022-2028 Landscape Character Assessment, Appendix 1 (p.106) identifies a schedule of protected views and scenic routes within Co. Roscommon. No protected views or scenic routes fall within the LVIA Study Area boundary, and none are within 7.3 km of the Proposed Development site; therefore, no visibility of the Proposed Development will occur from protected views or scenic routes and all protected views and scenic routes in Co. Roscommon are scoped out of this LVIA.

13.3.1.4 Co. Westmeath Policy Designations – Scoped Out

The initial desktop constraints study for this LVIA included a review of designations in Co. Westmeath on the eastern shore of Lough Ree, across from Hodson Bay, and found no potential for impacts in this area, thereby contributing to the choice to limit the LVIA Study Area size to areas within 1.8 km distance from the Planning Application Boundary. The study identified one regional-level protected scenic amenity in Co. Westmeath, protected view W-V01, with visibility in the direction of the Proposed Development site, located 7.1 km from the site on the eastern banks of Lough Ree. W-V01 is an elevated vantage point on the N55 National Road between Ballykeeran and Glasson with panoramic views looking out across Lough Ree towards Hodson Bay. Given the substantial distance, the Proposed Development is unlikely to be visible or cause negative visual impacts from this viewpoint and other nearby protected views in Co. Westmeath; therefore, designations in Co. Westmeath are scoped out and are not of concern for this assessment.

13.3.2 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

The RCDP 2022-2028 Landscape Character Assessment classifies the landscape areas of Co. Roscommon into a designated framework of seven broad Landscape Character Types (LCTs) divided into thirty-six smaller Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). No specific policy objectives are associated with the LCTs, while the LCAs are associated with the Landscape Value classifications reported previously in Section 13.3.1.1. The Proposed Development and most of the LVIA Study Area are located within the broader “River Corridor” LCT and specifically within “LCA-8 Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs,” as illustrated in Figure 13-11.

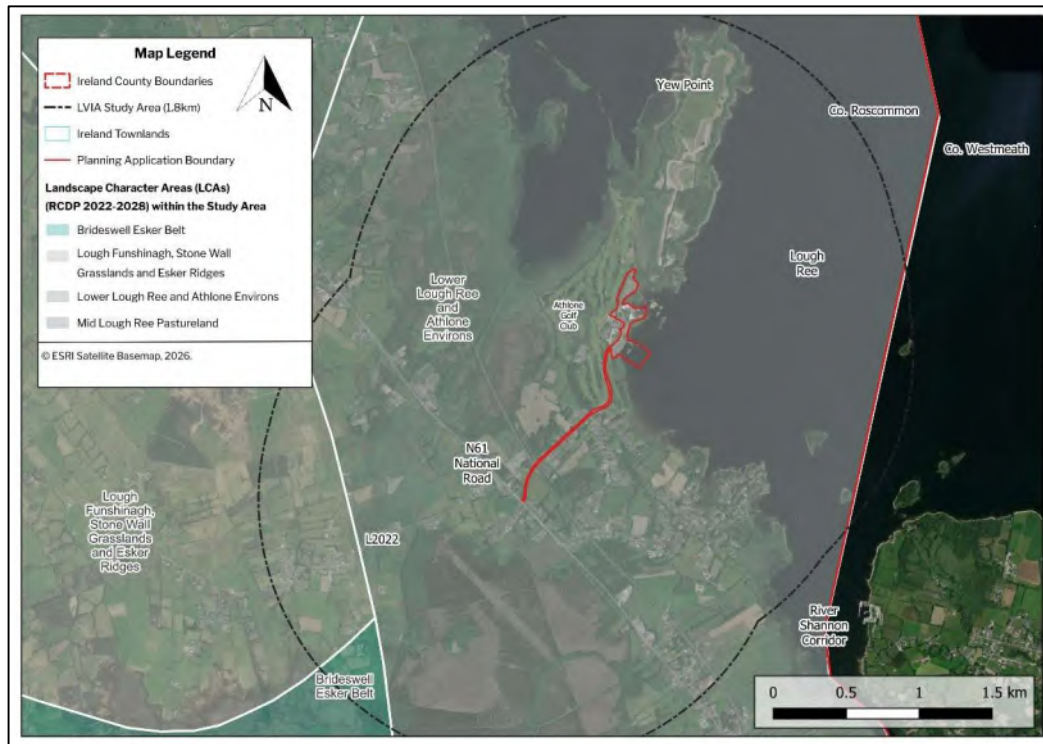


Figure 13-11 Landscape Character Area (LCA) designations of the Proposed Development site and LVIA Study Area

The RCDP Landscape Character Assessment (p.48), gives the defining characteristics of LCA-8 as:

“Area stretching southwards from the Hodson Bay settlement area, to north of the Cornafulla area. The western boundary is delineated by the River Shannon. The low-lying area is predominantly made up of dry grassland and raised bog, most of which is reclaimed, as well as smaller pockets of wet grassland and wetland. Conifer plantations also exist in the area. Two esker ridges run through the LCA - one running in a northerly direction towards the Hodson Bay peninsula. The overall image is of a peri-urban lakeshore area which is continuing to experience development pressure.”

In the RCDP Landscape Character Assessment, the Landscape Value of LCA-8 is classified as “Very High” owing to the presence of the River Shannon Corridor and Lough Ree, which is a Natura 2000 designated area holding three ecological designations: SAC, SPA (Special Protection Area) and pNHA (Proposed Natural Heritage Area). Note that the LVIA does not conduct assessment of European designated sites; please see Chapter 6 “Biodiversity” of this EIAR for the relevant ecological assessments. The “Forces of Change” for LCA-8 are described as being related to “*development pressure along the shores of Lough Ree, as well as along the regional and local road network.*” Other forces of change are related to the Shannon Callows which are located outside the LVIA Study Area. The “Key Recommendation” for LCA-8 with respect to development proposals is (p.49):

“Development along the shores of Lough Ree and the River Shannon south of Athlone should be limited in order to protect the visual amenity and the natural habitats of the water corridor.”

In the context of EIA, the Proposed Development’s location on the shores of Lough Ree is the focus of the assessment of effects on landscape character for this LVIA. In terms of landscape sensitivity, LCA-8 is considered “High” sensitivity for the purposes of this LVIA (see rationale for this rating in Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology, Section 1.6.1 Assessing Landscape Sensitivity). This is to reflect the “Very High” landscape value assigned in the RCDP 2022-2028 and to acknowledge that Lough Ree and its components of Yew Point and Hodson Bay adjacent to the River Shannon Corridor contribute to a rich and scenic riparian landscape as well as a key picturesque visual setting that is highly valued for recreational, tourism, and amenity purposes.

13.3.3 Landscape Character of the Proposed Development Site

Landscape character refers to the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how people perceive this. It reflects combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement that create the particular sense of place found in different areas. The identification of landscape character in this LVIA follows that outlined in the Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft for Guidelines for Planning Authorities Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2000), which comprises the identification of physical units (areas defined by landform and landcover) primarily and, where appropriate, of visual units.

13.3.3.1 Topography

The topography of the Proposed Development site and surrounding area is mapped below in Figure 13-12, with 1m contours, and indicates generally low elevation of no more than 46m above ordnance datum (AOD) within the Planning Application Boundary. The highest point within the site is located on the L2020 Local Road south of the hotel grounds, where the road approaches the shoreline. Within the main area of development, the topography generally slopes upwards (westwards) from the shoreline to an elevation of approximately 40-42m AOD to the north and south of the hotel grounds. Given this context, the site is considered to be generally flat, with a very gentle upward gradient rising from the water's edge.

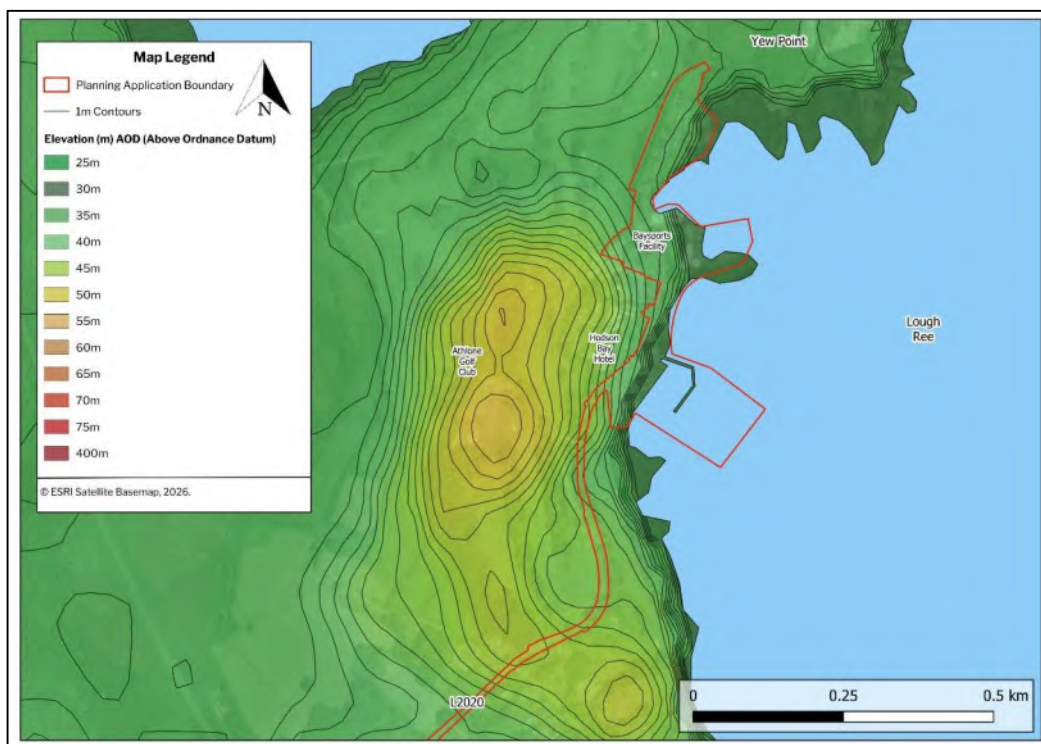


Figure 13-12 Topography map of the main development area within the Proposed Development Site

13.3.3.2 Landcover and Land Use



Figure 13-13 Aerial imagery of landcover and land use of the Proposed Development Site

Figure 13-13 above shows an aerial satellite image of the site and its immediate surrounds. The Proposed Development site essentially comprises two parts, identified in Figure 13-14: the “main area” comprising the northern part of the site in front of the hotel grounds, and the “road section” comprising the linear part of the site which follows the public roadway L2020.



Figure 13-14 Overhead view of the Proposed Development Site, looking north, showing the landscape character within and surrounding the Site

The main area of the Proposed Development site is renowned as a leisure destination and comprises active recreational land use and landcover including the existing marina facility, the Baysports water sports facility, car parking and landscaped areas. The main area is bounded to the west by well-maintained landscaped areas of Athlone Golf Club and Hodson Bay Hotel, to the north by the semi-natural park setting of Yew Point and to the east by Lough Ree.

The road section comprises the public roadway of L2020, with the north part passing through well-maintained landscaped areas within the golf club grounds, and then through a flat landscape of residential and agricultural fields bounded by relatively dense mature trees and vegetation. Figure 13-14 above and Plate 13-1 through Plate 13-3 below captured in May 2026 show overhead views of the surrounding flat landscape and peri-urban lakeshore environment.



Plate 13-1 Drone imagery of the Proposed Development site looking northwest



Plate 13-2 Drone imagery of the Proposed Development site looking west



Plate 13-3 Drone imagery of the Proposed Development site looking south

13.3.3.3 Onsite Views of Existing Recreational Features

Onsite visibility appraisal and site walkovers for this LVIA were conducted in September 2025 and May 2026 and included capture of on-the-ground images within the Site. Plate 13-4 through Plate 13-11 below show the existing features and landscape conditions of recreational use landcover such as Baysports and associated buildings, existing water amenities, footpaths, car parks and lawn areas, as well as the natural shoreline areas within the site comprising shallow-water reeds and grass banks.



Plate 13-4 Current buildings and features of the Baysports water sports facility



Plate 13-5 Current water amenities of the Baysports water sports facility



Plate 13-6 Existing shoreline and shallow water environment to the north of the Baysports water sports facility



Plate 13-7 View of the Baysports water sports facility with Hodson Bay Hotel in the background

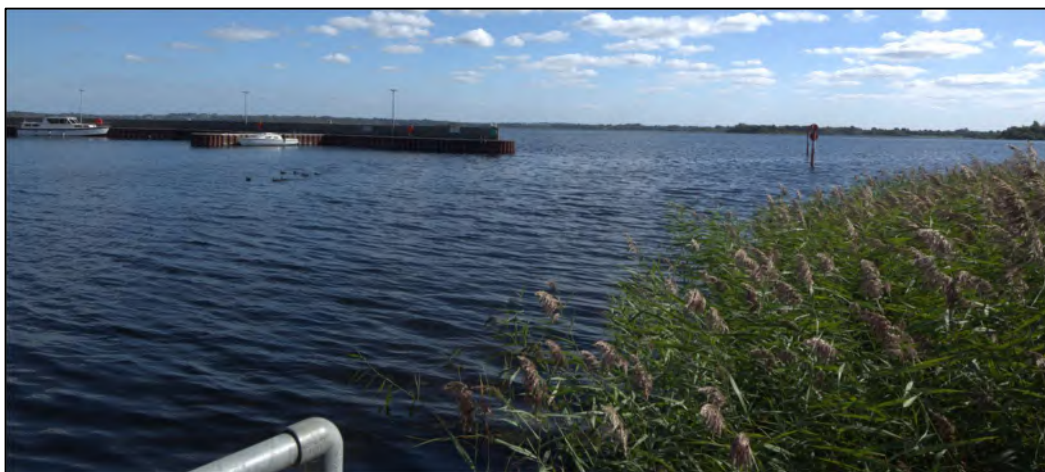


Plate 13-8 Current marina facility in front of Hodson Bay Hotel grounds



Plate 13-9 View from the dock of the current marina facility



Plate 13-10 Existing carpark in the north of the site with adjacent footpath (at the right) and landscaping



Plate 13-11 Existing carpark in front of the hotel grounds with adjacent footpath along the shoreline

13.3.4 Landscape Sensitivity of the Proposed Development Site

The landscape sensitivity of the Proposed Development site was determined for this LVIA by combining assessments of landscape “value” and “susceptibility to change,” see full methodology in Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology, Section 1.6.1 Assessing Landscape Sensitivity. The landscape “value” considers designations, landscape quality, scenic qualities, and other indicators of how the landscape is valued by society. The landscape “susceptibility to change” considers the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposed type of development without undue consequences for its character.

Table 13-1 below assesses indicators of landscape value for the site, which inform the determination of the site’s susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity rating, along with considering the existing landscape character and the nature (i.e. scope/scale) of the Proposed Development.

Table 13-1 Indicators of Landscape Value for the Proposed Development Site

Features & Attributes of Landscape Value	Description
Landscape Designations	The Proposed Development site is located within “LCA-8 Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs” which is designated as “Very High Value” in the RCDP 2022-2028 owing to the presence of the nearby River Shannon Corridor (which is outside the site boundary) and including Lough Ree.
Landscape Elements Quality / Condition	The landscape of the Proposed Development site is heavily modified and managed currently as a recreational amenity destination, with paved areas of carpark and manicured lawns with footpaths and tree plantings, as well as buildings for storage, a pumping station and amenity facilities. Along the shoreline and in the shallow water environment, the landscape has a higher degree of natural vegetation including reeds and grasses, with lawn areas that come up against the water. Existing features such as floating docks and water sports amenities are located in the shallow water environment.
Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	The Proposed Development site has good scenic and aesthetic qualities and high visual appeal in terms of its lakeside setting with long-range views across Lough Ree. Views within the site itself are of the manicured amenity areas, natural shoreline and car parks.
Perceptual Qualities (Tranquillity / Wildness / Naturalness)	The Proposed Development site has a good sense of tranquillity and remoteness, as it is a lakeside amenity destination that is removed from urban and residential areas. There is a mixed level of wildness / naturalness owing to the combination of paved areas, manicured parks and natural shoreline.
Rarity / Conservation Interests	Rare or protected vascular and bryophyte flora were identified directly within the site; these, along with the adjacent Lough Ree (as an SAC, SPA, and pNHA) are assessed in Chapter 6 “Biodiversity” of this EIAR.
Cultural Meaning / Associations	No archaeological materials, deposits or structures were identified within the Proposed Development site; see the complete assessment of cultural heritage resources in Chapter 12 “Cultural Heritage.”
Recreational Value	The recreational value of the Proposed Development site is very high owing to Hodson Bay being one component, as part of Lough Ree and Yew Point and the adjacent River Shannon Corridor, that contributes to a rich and scenic riparian landscape as well as a key picturesque visual setting that is highly valued for recreational, tourism, and amenity purposes.

In consideration of the value indicators detailed in Table 13-1 above, the landscape “value” of the Proposed Development site is deemed to be “High” owing to the very high recreational value coupled with lower degree of naturalness of the area. The “susceptibility to change” of the Proposed Development site is “Low” as the area is already highly developed and the Proposed Development constitutes an expansion/improvement to existing developed facilities in the site with respect to recreational amenity. On balance, the landscape sensitivity of the Proposed Development site is considered “Medium.”

13.3.5 Landscape Character and Key Relevant Sensitivities of the Wider Setting

13.3.5.1 Historical Landscape Character

The RCDP 2022-2028 Landscape Character Assessment Section 4.2.4 Historical Landscape (p.25) outlines “historical land use types” characterised by period of origin and landscape form and function. As reported previously in Section 13.3.2 LCAs, the Proposed Development site is located in LCA-8 Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs which does contain historical designations according to the “Figure 4 Historical Map of Landscape Character Areas” on p.27 of the RCDP Landscape Character Assessment, extracted below in Figure 13-15. The historical context of the Proposed Development site within Hodson Bay and as part of the Lough Ree / Yew Point area are considered in this LVIA in terms of impact assessment.

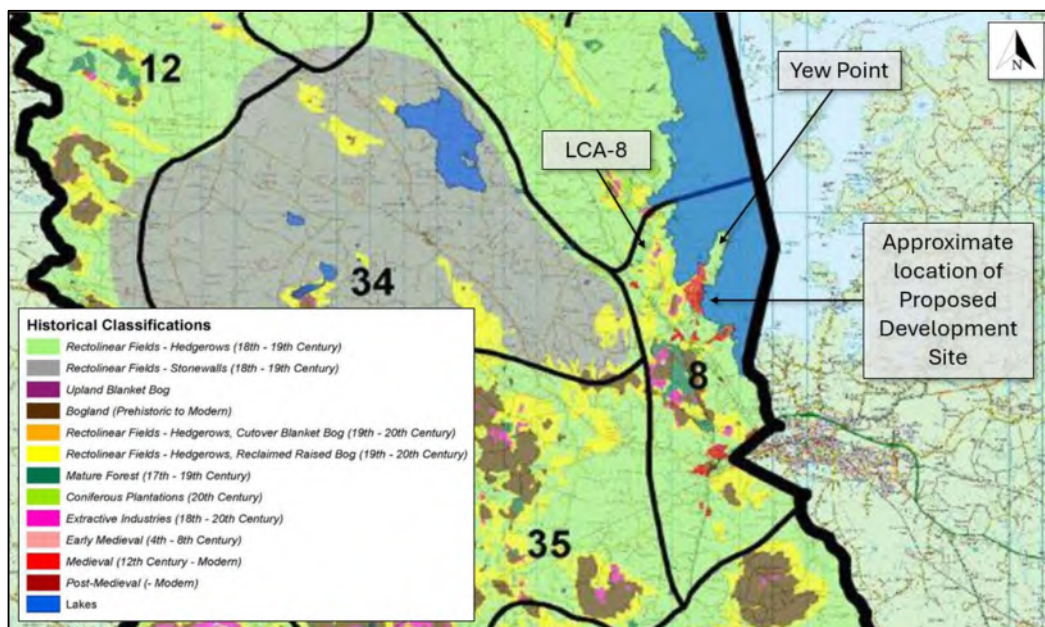


Figure 13-15 Historical landscape characterisation of Hodson Bay/Yew Point, modified from the RCDP 2022-2028 Landscape Character Assessment Figure 4 (p.27)

Hodson Bay falls within the category “Medieval 12th Century – Modern” defined as:

***“Towns/Villages (Medieval 12th Century – Modern):** The concept of a true town was introduced by the Anglo-Normans. Examples of medieval towns and villages in the county include Boyle, Castlereagh, Athleague, Ballintober, Castleplunket, Knockvicar, Termonbarry and Tulsk.”*

Yew Point falls within the category “Rectilinear Fields – Hedgerows (18th -19th Centuries)” which is the most predominant historical landscape in the county and is defined by many distinctive features, some of which can be identified in the area of Yew Point from the site walkover conducted for this LVIA. The definition in the RCDP is given as (p.27):

➤ ***“Rectilinear Fields – Hedgerows (18th 19th Centuries):** Enclosed fields typically rectangular or sub-rectangular in shape with relatively straight sides.*

- Boundaries of these fields made up of hedgerows with possible banks and ditches.
- Landscape was significantly remodelled by the work of the Congested Districts Board in the middle of the nineteenth century replacing the older, more informal clachan-and-rundale system. The result was the regimented ladder farms seen today.
- Clachan (or baile or 'village') was a nucleated group of farmhouses, with landholding organised communally (often on a townland basis and often with kinship ties).
- Houses were surrounded by the best possible land in the area, known as the infield (a large open-field unenclosed and permanently cultivated).
- Outside of the infield was the outfield, generally consisting of poorer land used as commonage.
- Many clachans initiated in the 18th century (due to population increases and the ability of the potato to grow in poor soils) but were probably even earlier."

13.3.5.2 Hodson Tower – Scoped Out

Hodson Tower, also known as Hodson's Pillar, is a 300-year-old stone folly located on a small island in Lough Ree near the entrance of Hodson Bay, situated approximately 120m from the Planning Application Boundary of the Proposed Development site at its closest point (see Figure 13-16 and Figure 13-17 below).



Figure 13-16 Location of Hodson Tower historical feature (scoped out) within Hodson Bay relative to the Proposed Development site



Figure 13-17 Drone imagery facing north, showing the overhead landscape view of Hodson Tower location relative to the Site

The tower is not easily accessible and not considered a tourist destination and there is no recreational development on the island where the tower is located. Therefore, views from the tower and island are not

considered sensitive and are not considered in this LVIA. Regarding lake views looking towards Hodson Tower from the current areas of recreational amenity, the tower and the island are not prominent within the lake views. For these reasons, while Hodson Tower is acknowledged as historical feature within Hodson Bay that is in close proximity to the Proposed Development site, it is not considered a sensitive receptor in the context of LVIA and is scoped out.

13.4

Visual Baseline

This section establishes the potential visibility of the Proposed Development from visual receptors located in the LVIA Study Area. This includes identification of key visual receptors and viewsheds, description of views towards the Proposed Development from a variety of perspectives, and selection of representative photomontage viewpoints.

The visual baseline has been informed by GIS mapping and site visits. Through this process, areas of the LVIA Study Area and receptors where visibility will not occur have been scoped out from further assessment due to visual screening by the built environment, vegetation, large landforms, or localised topography.

13.4.1

Visual Receptor Identification

Desktop studies and mapping exercises identified the following key sensitive visual receptors in the LVIA Study Area. These receptors are considered “High” sensitivity and are the focus of this LVIA:

- People travelling to the site to experience views from the shoreline at Hodson Bay.
- Users of Baysports water sports facility.
- Users of Hodson Bay Marina.

Baysports and the Hodson Bay Marina are both designated in the RCDP 2022-2028 as “Roscommon Tourism Attractions” and are both located within the Proposed Development site.

A number of other visual receptors were identified within the LVIA Study Area but are considered “Low” or “Medium/Low” sensitivity as the desk studies and onsite visibility appraisal determined that either, there will be no visibility of the Proposed Development, or there is no potential for significant landscape or visual effects as a result of the Proposed Development. These low and medium/low sensitivity receptors are therefore scoped out of the assessment; they include:

- Employees of Hodson Bay Hotel and Athlone Golf Club who travel to these destinations for work.
- Users of Athlone Golf Club who travel to the club grounds for leisure and use of the course and club amenities.
- Road users of N61 National Road.
- Users of the L2022 Local Road and nearby local road networks.
- Residents of the Reedside Cottages area and other dwellings in Barrymore townland.
- Cyclists on the Green Heartlands and Tain Trail Cycle Trail networks.
- Users of the Mayo Line railway.
- Other dwellings within nearby townlands including Cornaseer, Cappalisheen, Corramore and Barry Beg.

13.4.2

Viewpoint Selection and Rationale

Although not protected in the local planning policy, it is recognised that there are views of very high scenic quality from the Proposed Development site itself at Hodson Bay and its surrounds. The views from the shoreline at Hodson Bay contribute to the high landscape and recreational value of the lands at Hodson Bay, and the integrity of these views and amenities was given high consideration in the design of the Proposed Development. Accordingly, as reported above, the focus of the LVIA is on visual receptors of “High” sensitivity who travel to the site specifically to experience landscape amenities and views at Hodson Bay, including users of the designated tourism attraction sites.

As a result, 8 no. viewpoints (VP1-VP8, see Table 13-2 below) were selected for this LVIA and are concentrated within the Proposed Development footprint and demonstrate a variety of views looking east, outwards towards Hodson Bay and Lough Ree, as well as views looking inland, west, and north and south along the shoreline, towards existing developed areas and infrastructure.

Table 13-2 Viewpoint Locations and Descriptions

VP No.	Name and Description	Ref.
VP1	Baysports Pier. View from the existing pier at Baysports looking inland to the south, focused on the proposed Water Sports Pavilion and proposed waterfront and playground.	E: 600930. N: 746590.
VP2	Baysports Peninsula. View from the peninsula in front of Baysports, looking inland to the north, focused on the proposed Water Sports Pavilion and proposed pier and waterfront.	E: 600944. N: 746554.
VP3	Baysports Carpark. View from the current carpark located inland behind Baysports, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the rear of the proposed canopy structure within the Water Sports Pavilion.	E: 600818. N: 746564.
VP4	Hotel Shoreline. View along the shoreline in front of Hodson Bay Hotel, looking north towards the central area of the proposed Public Realm Upgrades.	E: 600826. N: 746442.
VP5	Marina Pier. View from the existing pier at Hodson Bay Marina, looking inland and along the shoreline to the north, focused on the proposed Public Realm Upgrades and the Water Sports Pavilion.	E: 600870. N: 746375.
VP6	Marina Shoreline. View from the shoreline at the southeast corner of the Hodson Bay Marina, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the proposed breakwater of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension.	E: 600788. N: 746301.
VP7	Marina Carpark. View from the existing carpark at Hodson Bay Marina, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the proposed landscaping and reconfiguration of parking as part of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension.	E: 600757. N: 746301.
VP8	L2020 Site Access. View from the L2020 Local Road facing north, focused on the area of road widening along the site access route, with mature trees and golf-stop netting to be altered on either side of the road.	E: 600739. N: 746030.

13.4.3



All visual receptors and the photomontage viewpoint locations are mapped below in Figure 13-18. The map also includes Yew Point cumulative baseline features which are identified and discussed in the next Section 13.5 Cumulative Baseline. As all viewpoints are concentrated within the footprint of the site, the following Figure 13-19 shows an enlarged view of the VP1-VP8 locations.



Figure 13-19 Enlargement of viewpoint locations VP1-VP8 within the Proposed Development site footprint

13.5 Cumulative Baseline from an LVIA Perspective

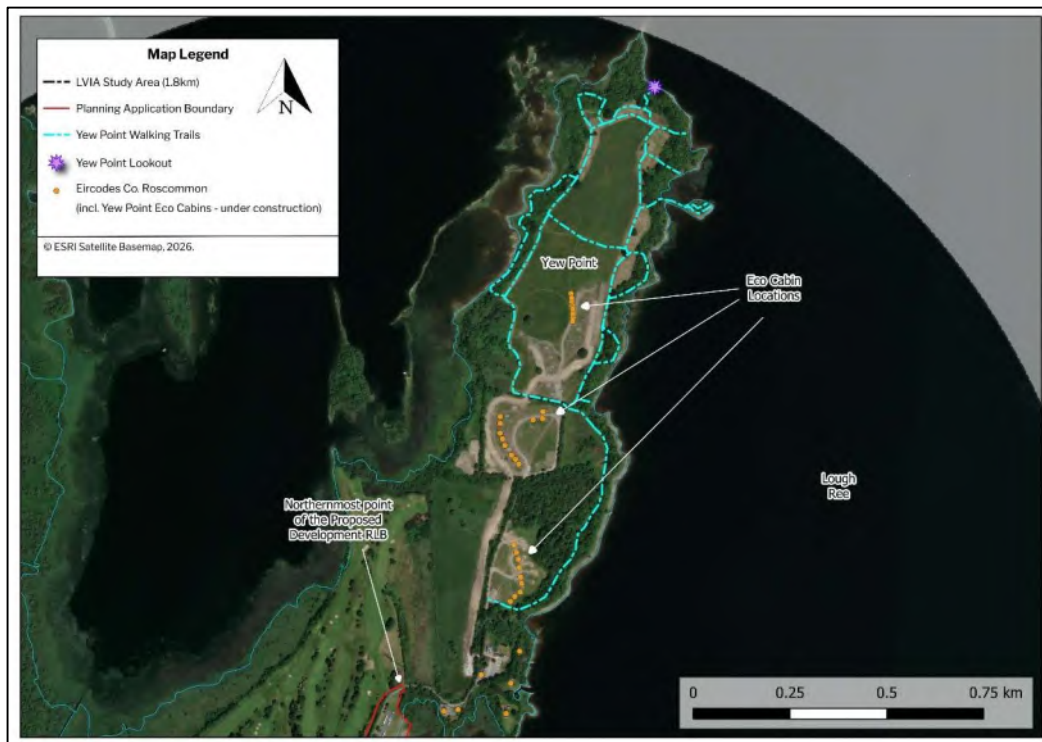


Figure 13-20 Landscape and visual receptors at Yew Point including cumulative development currently under construction

Yew Point Eco Cabins, Lookout and Trail System. The Yew Point Eco Cabins—currently under construction—are the closest cumulative development to the Proposed Development site with the

potential to give rise to cumulative effects in the context of LVIA. Figure 13-20 below indicates the location of Yew Point features relative to the Planning Application Boundary of the Proposed Development—the closest point of the Yew Point walking trail system is located approximately 320m from the northern tip of the site boundary and is not publicly accessible at the time of writing this LVIA, as the development area remains under construction.

The associated landscape and visual receptors include the cabins, which are distributed across three general locations at Yew Point, together with users of Yew Point Lookout and the Yew Point walking trail system. These features are all considered as part of the same 145-acre development property. The Yew Point Lookout and network of walking trails across Yew Point peninsula are not designated features in local policy and are not mapped or protected in the RCDP 2022-2028. Figure 13-21 through Figure 13-23 below show drone imagery of the different areas of eco cabin development. The assessment of potential effects is provided in Section 13.7.4 Cumulative Effects.



Figure 13-21 Drone imagery looking south, of Yew Point areas currently under construction (as of May 2026) for the eco cabins development and position relevant to the Proposed Development Site

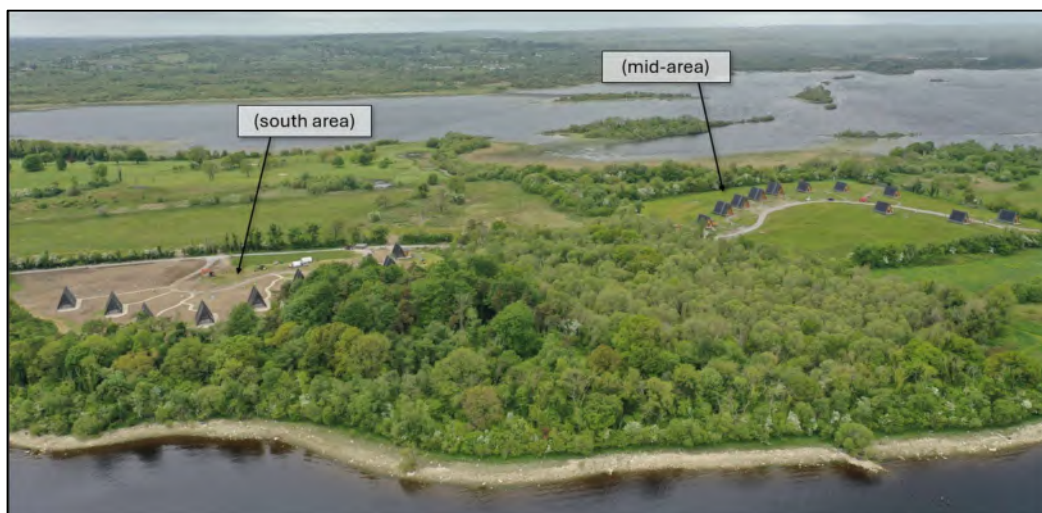


Figure 13-22 Drone imagery looking west, of south and mid-areas of Yew Point Eco Cabins under construction



Figure 13-23 Drone imagery facing northwest, of mid-area and north area of Yew Point Eco Cabins under construction and position relevant to Yew Point Lookout

Other Cumulative Considerations. As part of this EIAR, a search of cumulative developments within the vicinity of the Proposed Development was conducted and the list of developments was reviewed for this LVIA. It was determined that no other developments within the LVIA Study Area, aside from the Yew Point Eco Cabins described above, have the potential to give rise to cumulative landscape and visual effects with the Proposed Development from an LVIA perspective. This is due to the size, scale and nature of the cumulative developments which primarily include minor alterations or extensions of private dwellings. As a result, outside of the analysis of potential cumulative impacts with the Yew Point Eco Cabins, it has been determined that there will be no other potential cumulative landscape and visual effects in the context of EIA. See the assessment of potential cumulative effects with Yew Point Eco Cabins in Section 13.7.4 Cumulative Effects.

13.6 Photomontage Visual Impact Assessment Tables

The photomontages are assessed following the methodology Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology. The following tables should be read in conjunction with Appendix 13-2 Photomontage Booklet.

13.6.1 Viewpoint 1: Baysports Pier

Table 13-3 Viewpoint 1 Impact Assessment Table

VP1 Baysports Pier	
Location Details	- View from the existing pier at Baysports looking inland to the south, focused on the proposed Water Sports Pavilion and proposed waterfront and playground. - Grid Ref: E 600930, N 746590.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows the lake shoreline with grass banks and natural wooded areas lined with mature trees behind the existing Baysports buildings and equipment, which include white tents, rounded covered seating areas, wooden saunas, bamboo fencing and kayaks in the water. White composite fencing can be seen dividing the usable area along the grass bank. Hodson Bay Hotel buildings are partially visible beyond the treeline, and elements of the hotel carpark such as vehicles and lighting poles can be seen beyond the Baysports tents.
Proposed Photomontage Description	Demountable Canopies Up The proposed view shows the proposed café building together with its covered seating area, a waterfront terrace and a playground in the middle ground along the

VP1 Baysports Pier	
	shoreline. The wooded area in the background is retained and the lake shoreline remains unchanged. The proposed café and its covered seating area are the prominent buildings visible in the middle ground (the proposed water sports building is located off the right edge of the image—not pictured, see VP2). Some of the seasonal, demountable multi-use canopy tents are visible beyond the café, and proposed shaded seating areas in front of the café are visible along the raised part of the waterfront terrace. The proposed paved plaza space can be seen along the low ground of the grass bank, extending to the area of the proposed playground. Demountable Canopies Down (not pictured) Although not pictured in VP1, it is acknowledged that from October to early February the canopies will not be visible as shown in the Proposed View. The difference in the visual impact is not likely to be substantial and would not be expected to change the outcome of the significance rating reported below for this viewpoint; see Section 13.7.3.2 Visual Effects - Operational Phase for discussion of the difference in views regarding the demountable canopies.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	High on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination.
Magnitude of Change	Moderate on account of the prominence of the proposed café, covered seating area, pavilion features and the addition of the waterfront terrace.
Initial Significance	High × Moderate = “Moderate” = “Significant” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	➤ The Proposed Development increases recreational opportunities along the waterfront area and provides new and/or improved experience of views of Lough Ree from this location. ➤ The Proposed Development is integrated within the existing developed areas of the shoreline while retaining areas of natural woodland, shallow-water vegetation, and existing riparian habitats, thereby maintaining the established landscape character. ➤ The proposed café has a roof height that is broadly comparable to the existing woodland canopy, reducing its prominence against the wooded backdrop and the use of natural timber cladding complements the existing woodland / lake shore setting.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Positive.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “Moderate” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i>

13.6.2 Viewpoint 2: Baysports Peninsula

Table 13-4 Viewpoint 2 Impact Assessment Table

VP2 Baysports Peninsula	
Location Details	- View from the peninsula in front of Baysports, looking inland to the north, focused on the proposed Water Sports Pavilion and existing slipway and floating jetty. - Grid Ref: E 600944, N 746554.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows the Baysports water sports facility and its associated buildings along the waterfront, including white tents, covered seating areas, saunas and kayaks along the shoreline in front of Baysports, and along the peninsula in the foreground. The existing pier and floating docks extend from the right edge of the shoreline, with reeds visible beyond. Semi-mature trees are visible behind the buildings and tents in left and centre of the view which extend into riparian woodland at the right side of the view. Reeds are visible in front of the riparian woodland to the right and to the left of the view, in front of the peninsula.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The prominent features within the proposed view are the proposed Water Sports Pavilion building in the centre of the view, along with the café, covered seating area, and stepped terrace with landscaping and seating walls. The existing floating jetty and slipway remain unchanged. The trees and reeds remain unchanged. The addition of the proposed ball-stop netting along the north edge of the Proposed Development is partially visible beyond and above the semi-mature woodland and increases the skyline in that area.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	High on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination.
Magnitude of Change	Moderate on account of the prominence of the proposed water sports building, café, covered seating area, pavilion features and the addition of the waterfront terrace, along with the addition of the ball-stop netting.
Initial Significance	High × Moderate = “Moderate” = “Significant” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	- The Proposed Development increases recreational opportunities along the waterfront area and provides new and / or improved experience of views of Lough Ree from this location. - The Proposed Development is integrated within the existing developed areas of the shoreline while retaining areas of natural woodland, shallow-water vegetation, and existing riparian habitats, thereby maintaining the established landscape character. - The proposed Water Sports Pavilion has a roof height that is broadly comparable to the existing woodland canopy, reducing its prominence against the wooded backdrop and the use of natural timber cladding complements the existing woodland / lake shore setting.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Positive/Neutral.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “Moderate” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i>

13.6.3

Viewpoint 3: Baysports Carpark

Table 13-5 Viewpoint 3 Impact Assessment Table

VP3 Baysports Carpark	
Location Details	- View from the current carpark located inland behind Baysports, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the rear of the proposed canopy structure within the Water Sports Pavilion. - Grid Ref: E 600818, N 746564.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows parked vehicles along the carpark access road in the foreground, with row of trees, public lighting, footpath and grass lawn in the middle ground and paladin fence, trees, tents, covered seating and water sports equipment. There is a long range, distant, glimpsed view of the Lough Ree and its far shores in far background.
Proposed Photomontage Description	Demountable Canopies Up The proposed view shows the rear-view of the Water Sports Pavilion, with the prominent features being the roof of the proposed water sports building at the left and the proposed seasonal, demountable multi-use canopies across the view. The proposed fence is partially screened by proposed planting, comprising a mixture of low shrubs, ornamental grasses and perennials and semi mature tree planting planted at intervals in front of the fence. A proposed footpath runs adjacent to narrowed access road in the foreground of the view. The vista in this and in views along this road will be shortened and existing glimpsed views of the lake will be screened by the Proposed Development. Demountable Canopies Down (not pictured) Although not pictured in VP3, it is acknowledged that from October to early February the canopies will not be visible as shown in the Proposed View, thereby from this vantage point allowing more open visibility in the direction of Lough Ree. As the proposed water sports building is the main visible feature, the difference in the visual impact for the view without the canopies would not be expected to change the outcome of the significance rating reported below for this viewpoint; see Section 13.7.3.2 Visual Effects – Operational Phase for discussion of the difference in views regarding the demountable canopies.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	Low on account of the viewpoint location being along a road within a carpark which does not represent a specific recreational destination.
Magnitude of Change	Substantial on account of the Proposed Development being prominent across the entire view both vertically and horizontally.
Initial Significance	Low × Substantial = “Moderate/Minor” = “Moderate” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	- The viewpoint does not represent a destination where receptors come to experience landscape views or views of Lough Ree. - The removal of parallel parking from the carriageway will improve pedestrian safety and visual appearance.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Negative.

VP3 Baysports Carpark	
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “ Moderate ” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i>

13.6.4 Viewpoint 4: Hotel Shoreline

Table 13-6 Viewpoint 4 Impact Assessment Table

VP4 Hotel Shoreline	
Location Details	- View along the shoreline in front of Hodson Bay Hotel, looking north towards the central area of the proposed Public Realm Upgrades. - Grid Ref: E 600826, N 746442.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows long distance open view of Lough Ree from the grass shoreline in front of the hotel, with one small bench seat positioned towards the lake. Part of the paved footpath is visible behind the bench. Reeds are visible in the shallow water of the midground, with mature woodland along the peninsula visible in the background. A few white tents of the Baysports water sports facility are visible beyond the grass shoreline, and Hodson’s Pillar is visible on its small island within the lake.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The proposed view shows the edge of the proposed promenade and adjacent landscaping which are part of the proposed Public Realm Upgrades. Open, long-distance views of Lough Ree are preserved. Additional benches are provided at the water’s edge within proposed landscaping, the shallow-water reeds and mature woodland of the peninsula are retained. A partial view of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion is visible in the background, at the left edge of the 73.7° angle view image only.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	High on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination.
Magnitude of Change	Slight on account of there being no change to open views of Lough Ree as a result of the proposed infrastructure.
Initial Significance	High × Slight = “Moderate/Minor” = “Moderate” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	- The Proposed Development preserves existing views of Lough Ree. - The Proposed Development enhances the quality of pedestrian realm and improves seating opportunities, with views oriented towards the lake.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Positive.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “ Not Significant ” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i>

13.6.5 Viewpoint 5: Marina Pier

Table 13-7 Viewpoint 5 Impact Assessment Table

VP5 Marina Pier	
Location Details	- View from the existing pier at Hodson Bay Marina, looking inland and along the shoreline to the north, focused on the proposed Public Realm Upgrades and the Water Sports Pavilion. - Grid Ref: E 600870, N 746375.
Description of Existing View	The existing view is medium range, and comprises of lake and lake shoreline in the fore and middle ground, and car park and mature / semi mature trees in the background with Hodson Bay Hotel as a backdrop in the left of the view. There are slight, partial views of Baysports buildings in the background to the right of the view.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The proposed view shows the proposed landscaping and promenade of the Public Realm Upgrades in the centre of the image and the proposed buildings and demountable canopy tops of the Water Sports Pavilion at the right of the view. The proposed landscaping, as seen in the centre of the view, replaces cars visible in the existing view with soft landscape planting scheme that adds a variety of colours, heights, and textures along the shoreline. The Water Sports Pavilion buildings are of similar or lower height than the visible woodland canopies. The reeds are retained in the water along the shoreline and so are the trees behind the development. The proposed promenade is a low-lying linear feature that visibly connects the Water Sports Pavilion to the proposed Marina Redevelopment and Extension which is located off the left edge of the image (not pictured).
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	High on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination.
Magnitude of Change	Moderate on account of the good integration and connection of proposed elements within the existing landscape.
Initial Significance	High × Moderate = “Moderate” = “Significant” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	- The Proposed Development is integrated into the developed areas of the shoreline while maintaining areas of natural woodland and existing shallow-water grasses and vegetation. - The removal of carpark area and replacement with the linear feature of the promenade walkway bordered by landscaping enhances the quality of the central portion of the view. - The proposed landscaping adds a variety of colours, heights, and textures within the centre of the view. - The height of proposed buildings is proportionate to the existing woodland and buildings are seen against a backdrop of trees. - The use of timber cladding helps to integrate the buildings into the surrounding landscape .
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Positive.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “Slight” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i>

13.6.6 Viewpoint 6: Marina Shoreline

Table 13-8 Viewpoint 6 Impact Assessment Table

VP6 Marina Shoreline	
Location Details	- View from the shoreline at the southeast corner of the Hodson Bay Marina, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the proposed breakwater of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension. - Grid Ref: E 600788, N 746301.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows long-ranging views over Lough Ree and marina infrastructure with utility poles and boat docks visible in the middle ground. The far shore of Lough Ree is visible along the entire width of the distant view in the background, and some reeds are visible in the immediate foreground.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The proposed view shows the proposed docks and proposed breakwater of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, visible beyond the existing dock. The proposed infrastructure is visible across the full width of the view and does not raise the vertical height of infrastructure; thereby still allowing for long distance views across Lough Ree to the far shore, from vantagepoints above the infrastructure.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	High on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination.
Magnitude of Change	Moderate due to the addition of water sports infrastructure in this view.
Initial Significance	High × Moderate = “Moderate” = “Significant” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	The colour and materials used for the proposed Marina Redevelopment and Extension compliment the surrounding landscape.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Negative.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “Moderate” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i>

13.6.7 Viewpoint 7: Marina Carpark

Table 13-9 Viewpoint 7 Impact Assessment Table

VP7 Marina Carpark	
Location Details	- View from the existing carpark at Hodson Bay Marina, looking towards the lake to the east, focused on the proposed landscaping and reconfiguration of parking as part of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension. - Grid Ref: E 600757, N 746301.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows a portion of relatively wide, open tarmac within the existing car park with landscaped verges to either side. A low wall and grass bank can be seen

VP7 Marina Carpark	
	along the water's edge, which form a currently unusable space in front of parked vehicles, with no dedicated pedestrian walkways. Long-ranging views of Lough Ree are available from this vantage point though it is not a recreational destination point, only a location within the car park area. This view is most likely to be experienced by receptors within vehicles as they are arriving to the marina and parking a vehicle.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The proposed view shows the proposed reconfiguration of the car park with new landscaping, semi-mature tree planting and dedicated pedestrian walkways. The proposed promenade, part of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, is visible along the waterfront, will improve the connectivity and allow for recreational walks along the shoreline. The long-ranging views of Lough Ree are preserved.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	Medium on account of the viewpoint location being within a car park which does not represent a specific recreational destination, but which does have scenic views available.
Magnitude of Change	Slight on account that the proposed changes are limited to re-configuration of already existing car park and removal of grass area in lieu of provision of a promenade walkway.
Initial Significance	Medium × Slight = "Minor" = "Slight" (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	➤ The viewpoint does not represent a destination where receptors come to experience landscape views or views of Lough Ree. ➤ The Proposed Development adds new recreational opportunity for the waterfront area and allows new experience of views of Lough Ree from the location of the promenade, which before was an unusable area. ➤ The pedestrian use of the carpark is improved for aesthetics and safety, as well as practical use allowing integrated access along dedicated walkways through the parking area.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Positive.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered " Slight " (EPA, 2022). <i>"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."</i>

13.6.8 Viewpoint 8: L2020 Site Access

Table 13-10 Viewpoint 8 Impact Assessment Table

VP8 L2020 Site Access	
Location Details	➤ View from the L2020 Local Road facing north, focused on the area of road widening along the site access route, with mature trees and golf ball-stop netting to be altered on either side of the road. ➤ Grid Ref: E 600739, N 746030.
Description of Existing View	The existing view shows the L2020 Local Road where it passes through the golf course property near the entrance into the main area of the Proposed Development site. There is a grass ditch and ball-stop netting on left side of the view and a pedestrian walkway along the right side of the view. Various styles and heights of

VP8 L2020 Site Access	
	metal fencing and golf ball-stop netting are visible along both sides of the road, and mature vegetation can be seen along the entire visible length of road.
Proposed Photomontage Description	The proposed view shows the widened footpath with space for an unmarked cycling lane along the east side of the road. The proposed golf ball-stop netting of uniform height and style can be seen along both sides of the road. Mature vegetation along the east side has been removed and replanted with semi-mature trees and low planting inside the netting, within the golf course property. The grass ditch and mature trees along the west side of the road are retained.
Sensitivity of Viewpoint and Receptors	Low on account of the viewpoint representing an access road with no scenic views.
Magnitude of Change	Slight on account of the general character of the view, as a simple access point, remaining the same.
Initial Significance	Low × Slight = “Minor/Negligible” = “Not Significant” (EPA, 2022).
Factors Mitigating Visual Effects	➤ The viewpoint does not represent a destination where receptors come to experience landscape views or views of Lough Ree. ➤ The pedestrian and cyclist facilities are improved due to widening of the footpath, thus allowing for safer use of the facility for both types of users. ➤ Mature trees have been retained where possible, the replacement trees will mature and provide greenery in the long term. ➤ The general character of the views along this access route will not be substantially altered.
Duration, Type, Quality of Effect	Permanent, Direct, Neutral.
Residual Visual Effect	On balance, the residual visual effect is considered “Not Significant” (EPA, 2022). <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i>

13.7 Likely Significant Landscape and Visual Effects

This section reports and discusses the potential for landscape and visual effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development and focuses on the aspects of the Water Sports Pavilion Building, Marina Redevelopment and Extension, and the Public Realm Upgrades with extensive new landscaping. The secondary aspects of the Proposed Development are also discussed: the Active Travel and Site Access Improvements along L2020 Local Road, the extension of the existing parking provision and the ancillary works and infrastructure.

The residual landscape and visual effects follow the methodology set out in Appendix 13-1 LVIA Methodology. The effects are reported in terms of whether they are “Significant” in the context of EIA and consider the above aspects of the Proposed Development throughout the Construction and Operational Phases of the project.

13.7.1 “Do-Nothing” Scenario

As outlined in Chapter 3 “Reasonable Alternatives” Section 3.4, if the Proposed Development was not to proceed, the opportunity to construct a new water sports pavilion, redevelop an existing marina, provide

an upgraded safer active travel corridor, develop a landscaped public realm area, a continuous promenade along the shore of Lough Ree, and all ancillary works at this appropriately zoned site would be lost. Chapter 3 also outlines the benefits lost in terms of economic growth, tourism, recreation and employment.

With respect to landscape and visual amenity, if the Proposed Development were not to proceed, there would be no change to the existing environment of the Proposed Development site. The Proposed Development site would continue to operate the existing Baysports water sports facility and outbuildings and the existing Hodson Bay Marina as recreational destinations adjacent to the existing/operational hotel and golf course amenities, utilising the existing parking provision of 353 no. parking spaces. The existing access road L2020 with dual carriageway and single-side pedestrian footpath would remain as is. No new landscape and visual impacts would occur, and the landscape and visual impact would be neutral in the context of EIA.

13.7.2 Construction Phase Effects

The Construction Phase is expected to be carried out across a period of approximately 30 months therefore the related effects will be “Short-Term” (1 to 7 years) in duration as per definitions in the EPA (2022) guidance, and the detailed construction works required to build the Proposed Development are set out in Chapter 4. These works will have a direct effect on the landscape where the landform and landcover of the Proposed Development site is materially altered. During the construction phase, potential landscape and visual effects will occur as the Proposed Development site will temporarily change from a series of existing / operational recreational destination sites into construction sites; then revert back to operational recreational sites. In addition, the construction works will involve a temporary relocation of the operative Baysports water sports facilities to the north of the Site to ensure continued use of this amenity during the Construction Phase. The relocation will involve the temporary set up of tents and canopies to store equipment, portacabins, portaloos and portashowers. There will be an overhead or underground power connection to an existing substation onsite and water supply will be provided via a connection to a watermain that runs through the L2020 Local Road, as such, a very short trench will be inserted to make this watermain connection. There is potential for this trench to be inserted entirely into the existing road/carpark i.e. no disturbance to the amenity grassland in this area. This will be the only ground works required for the temporary set up. Overall, the temporary relocation of Baysports water sports facilities will involve minimally invasive works and will be set within a relatively screened area from a visual perspective, thus no significant landscape or visual impacts would be expected to occur from this portion of the construction works.

13.7.2.1 Landscape Effects – Construction Phase

Potential landscape effects during the Construction Phase include vegetation removal, earthworks, activities of machinery, increased traffic - all resulting in noise and dust in the landscape, and a subsequent change in the character of the landscape which currently is a mix of developed areas with natural woodlands and lakeshore into construction sites. The following impacts are noted.

As part of the construction of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion, a temporary cofferdam, installed to a level of 37.5mAOD will be installed along the shore of Lough Ree to ensure an enclosure of safe, dry working conditions. The cofferdam will temporarily impact the shoreline and shallow water environment of Lough Ree and will also give rise to temporary visual effects, see next Section 13.7.2.2.

As part of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, piles will be driven into the lake bed to hold floating pontoons; however, there will be no dewatering of the lake as a result. As part of the Active Travel Site Access Improvements along L2020 Local Road, several mature trees will be removed from the landscape to facilitate the road widening. While the trees are to be substituted with replacement planting of semi-mature trees that will mature over time, nonetheless it represents a partial loss of mature woodland in this part of the landscape footprint.

On balance, the landscape effects on the footprint of the Proposed Development site during the Construction Phase are predicted to be “Short-Term,” “Direct” and “Negative,” with a significance rating of “Moderate,” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

13.7.2.2 Visual Effects – Construction Phase

Potential visual effects during the Construction Phase include potentially negative impacts on nearby visual receptors as a result of vegetation removal, increased traffic, earthworks and operation of machinery in close proximity to the Hodson Bay Hotel and Athlone Golf Club properties. These visual effects will be most pronounced in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development site. Large machinery may be intermittently required to facilitate construction of the Water Sports Pavilion and Marina Redevelopment and Extension; the machinery may be partially visible for receptors visiting the hotel and golf club.

The temporary cofferdam of up to 37.5mAOD in height will consist of sheet pile walls and bunds around a proposed hardstanding with 37.5mAOD tie in locations at either end. The structure will likely be visible in part or in full from areas within the adjacent Hodson Bay Hotel grounds, particularly from upper-storey windows on the northern end. Visual screening will be provided on the landward side to screen the cofferdam and its associated structures to the greatest degree possible for the entire Construction Phase, for receptors on land. The temporary cofferdam will likely be visible to receptors on the water, with little to no screening.

Construction boats may be temporarily visible in the vicinity of the marina. The loss of mature trees along L2020 Local Road will be noticeable but this change is located in an area of the site which is not a visitor destination and therefore the visual impacts will only be experienced while travelling along this corridor, by road users, cyclists and pedestrians. On balance, the visual effects on the footprint of the Proposed Development site during the Construction Phase are predicted to be “Short-Term,” “Direct” and “Negative,” with a significance rating of “Moderate,” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

13.7.3 Operational Phase Effects

The Operational Phase commences following completion of construction works. Mitigation, remedial and avoidance measures have been integral to the design of the Proposed Development. Strategic siting and design of infrastructure components reduce the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development and are therefore factored into the following assessments of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development has been designed to provide a long-term enhancement to the local area from a landscape and visual perspective. Accordingly, all operational effects are considered to be “Permanent” in the context of EIA.

13.7.3.1 Landscape Effects – Operational Phase

Landscape of the Proposed Development Site

As reported previously in Section 13.3.4, this LVIA considers the landscape sensitivity of the Proposed Development site to be “Medium.” Considering that the landscape of the site is already developed with respect to existing/operational water sports buildings, marina facilities, and tourism recreational use along with paved tarmac and carpark areas, the Operational Phase effects on the landscape as a result of the Proposed Development will remain similar to the baseline conditions, explained as follows.

The proposed Water Sports Pavilion is to sit within a similar footprint of the existing Baysports water sports facility, and the proposed Marina Redevelopment and Extension will extend further into the lake and provide additional berthing facilities for boats and other vessels. On land, no substantial areas of the landscape will have new development, except for the Public Realm Upgrades which will be planted and landscaped with native woodland and riparian species to enhance the biodiversity and natural habitat of the Lough Ree shoreline. The Proposed Development allows for retention of the shallow water reeds and grasses, as well as retention and enhancement of the wild swimming area to the north and allows for retention of existing natural woodlands along the shoreline and the peninsulas, which naturally divide the use areas into marina, water sports and wild swimming. The proposed promenade of the Public Realm Upgrades provides extensive new landscaping and redevelopment of the shoreline to provide a pedestrian priority environment with new access to the water.

In terms of landscape amenity, the Proposed Development represents both an improvement and enhancement of the area of this site, as the promenade and pavilion provide new opportunity for receptors to visit and enjoy the landscape as a recreational destination. On balance, the landscape effects during the Operational Phase on the landscape footprint of the Proposed Development site are predicted to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive,” with a significance rating of “Moderate” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

LCA-8: Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs

In the context of EIA, the Proposed Development’s location on the shores of Lough Ree is the focus of the assessment of effects on landscape character for this LVIA. As reported previously in Section 13.3.2, the LVIA is cognisant that the RCDP 2022-2028 classifies LCA-8 as “Very High” value and considers “development pressure along the shores of Lough Ree” as a force of change for the LCA as well as gives the key recommendation for the LCA to limit development along the shores of Lough Ree in order to “protect the visual amenity and natural habitats of the water corridor.” For these reasons, the LVIA considers LCA-8 to be “High” sensitivity. Because the Proposed Development is limited to redevelopment within essentially the same footprint of existing developments at Lough Ree, and also represents enhancements and improvements to the landscape and habitats within this footprint, the impacts to LCA-8 are considered acceptable from a landscape character perspective. As a result of the Proposed Development, the “Very High” value of LCA-8 is not only preserved but also promoted through allowing continued recreational use within the already developed tourism destination that delivers an enhanced recreational experience. The visual amenity of LCA-8 in the area of the Proposed Development is preserved or enhanced, as the views of Lough Ree and the shoreline / shallow water environments are maintained and new opportunities to experience lake views are provided. As a result, the magnitude of change to LCA-8 is considered “Slight.” On balance, the effects on landscape character of LCA-8: Lower Lough Ree and Athlone Environs, in which the Proposed Development is located, are predicted to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Neutral,” with a significance rating of “Slight” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

13.7.3.2 Visual Effects – Operational Phase

Table 13-11 Visual Impact Assessment of Viewpoints VPI-VP8

VP No.	Name	Duration, Type and Quality of Effect	Sensitivity of Receptors	Magnitude of Visual Change	Significance of Residual Effect
VP1	Baysports Pier.	Permanent, Direct, Positive.	High.	Moderate.	Moderate.
VP2	Baysports Peninsula.	Permanent, Direct, Positive / Neutral.	High.	Moderate.	Moderate.
VP3	Baysports Carpark.	Permanent, Direct, Negative.	Low.	Substantial.	Moderate.
VP4	Hotel Shoreline.	Permanent, Direct, Positive.	High.	Slight.	Not Significant.
VP5	Marina Pier.	Permanent, Direct, Positive.	High.	Moderate.	Slight.

VP No.	Name	Duration, Type and Quality of Effect	Sensitivity of Receptors	Magnitude of Visual Change	Significance of Residual Effect
VP6	Marina Shoreline.	Permanent, Direct, Negative.	High.	Moderate.	Moderate.
VP7	Marina Carpark.	Permanent, Direct, Positive.	Medium.	Slight.	Slight.
VP8	L2020 Site Access.	Permanent, Direct, Neutral.	Low.	Slight.	Not Significant.

Water Sports Pavilion & Demountable Canopies

The assessment of the potential visual effects during the Operational Phase of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion considers the visual aesthetics of the new water sports centre and multi-use canopy (demountable, intended for seasonal use) and plaza space including the café and terrace and which maintains the existing slipway. Primary views in the direction of the pavilion from close proximity are represented by VP1, VP2 and VP3, and a medium-range view of the pavilion within its setting alongside the Public Realm Upgrades and the Hodson Bay Marina as shown in VP5.

VP1 and VP2 represent “High” sensitivity receptors viewing the Proposed Development from within the usable areas, and were deemed to experience “Moderate” magnitude of change on account of the prominence of the proposed water sports building, café, covered seating area, pavilion features and the addition of the waterfront terrace. The high quality of the proposed buildings is considered to enhance and improve the visual aesthetics compared to the existing water sports facility structures. The significance of residual effect is considered to be “Moderate” and quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive” / “Neutral.”

VP3 represents “Low” sensitivity receptors using the carpark and access road behind the pavilion and shows the “Substantial” magnitude of change to the views that will be experienced from this vantage point as a result of the seasonal, demountable multi-use canopies which are visible across the entire view. The viewing vista has been shortened by introduction of new features closer to the receptor and intermittent, glimpsed views of the lake will be screened by the Proposed Development. Seasonally, the canopies will be demounted and will therefore not be seen during several months of the year. When the canopies are demounted, the view of VP3 will be similarly taken up by views of the Water Sports Pavilion building, café and related buildings. The significance of residual effect is considered to be “Moderate” and the quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Negative.”

VP5 represents “High” sensitivity receptors on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to Lough Ree and the adjacent hotel destination and the vantage point shows a medium-range view overlooking majority of the Proposed Development on shore. The magnitude of change was deemed to be “Moderate” however due to integration and connection of proposed elements within the existing landscape including rooftops of the pavilion buildings which do not raise the skyline or extend above the treeline and materiality complementing the surrounding landscape the significance of residual effect is considered to be “Slight” and the quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive.”

Regarding the seasonal, demountable canopies which will be taken down annually between October to February, Figure 13-24 through Figure 13-27 below show architect CGI renderings (not verified photomontages) of the different views of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion from both aerial and ground level perspectives. It can be seen that when the canopies are not in place, there may be greater opportunity to experience long distance views towards Lough Ree from some vantage points located

behind or south of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion, such as from the carpark and access roads behind the pavilion site. Such locations are not considered destinations where receptors come specifically to experience landscape views; therefore, as stated previously in the visual impact tables for VP1 and VP3, the difference in the visual impact is not likely to be substantial and would not be expected to change the outcome of the significance ratings reported for these viewpoints.



Figure 13-24 Aerial view of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion showing the demountable canopies in place (March to September)
(CGI render extracted from architect planning pack)



Figure 13-25 Aerial view of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion showing the demountable canopies absent (October to February)
(CGI render extracted from architect planning pack)



Figure 13-26 Ground level view of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion showing the demountable canopies in place (March to September) (CGI render extracted from architect planning pack)



Figure 13-27 Ground level view of the proposed Water Sports Pavilion showing the demountable canopies absent (October to February) (CGI render extracted from architect planning pack)

On balance, the visual effects during the Operational Phase arising as a result of the Water Sports Pavilion and its associated ancillary infrastructure including the demountable canopies, are predicted to be not significant in the context of EIA.

Marina Redevelopment and Extension

The potential visual effects during the Operational Phase of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension consider the visual aesthetics of the upgraded breakwater and extension of the existing jetty along with the addition of new boat servicing and commercial facilities.

VP5 represents “High” sensitivity receptors on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to the marina as part of Hodson Bay within Lough Ree, and the adjacent hotel destination. The visual impact assessment found a “Moderate” magnitude of change however on account of the integration and connection of proposed elements within the existing landscape as viewed from VP5 and materiality complementing the surrounding landscape the significance of residual effect is considered to be “Slight” and the quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive.”

VP6 represents “High” sensitivity receptors on account of the substantial recreational amenity and tourism value attributed to the marina as part of Hodson Bay within Lough Ree, and the adjacent hotel destination. The visual impact assessment found a “Moderate” magnitude of change as the proposed extension of the marina development is discernible as partial obstruction of the existing view. Change is readily noticeable but not substantially different in scale and character from the surroundings. The significance of residual effect is considered to be “Moderate” and the quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Negative.”

VP7 represents views experienced by “Medium” sensitivity receptors using the car park, people who drive and walk through the proposed car park. Whilst long-distance views of Lough Ree are available from this vantage point, the car park is not a destination site which people specifically visit to experience lake views.

The Proposed Development increases opportunities to experience views of the lake by the addition of the promenade.

On balance, the visual effects during the Operational Phase arising as a result of the Marina Redevelopment and Extension are predicted to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and ranging from “Positive” to “Negative” in quality, with a significance rating ranging from “Not Significant” to “Moderate,” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

Public Realm Upgrades and Views of Lough Ree

The assessment of potential visual effects during the Operational Phase of the Public Realm Upgrades considers primarily the preservation of existing views towards Lough Ree, and secondarily the integration with the surrounding landscape, visual aesthetics of the playground, nature observation space, picnic areas, wellness meadow, events space and the promenade which provides a visual connection between the Water Sports Pavilion and Hodson Bay Marina along the shoreline.

The visual impact assessment of viewpoint VP4, which represents “High” sensitivity receptors experiencing views towards Lough Ree, indicates that there is no change to open views of Lough Ree as a result of the Proposed Development and furthermore, that opportunities for new experience of views is ensured. The visual aesthetics of the Public Realm Upgrade elements is considered an improvement of the baseline conditions, due to retention of the primary components of the view and the addition of usable promenade space and integration of planting and landscaping comprising a variety of colours, textures and heights.

On balance, the visual effects during the Operational Phase arising as a result of the Public Realm Upgrades are predicted to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive,” with a significance rating of “Slight,” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

Access Road Enhancements, Parking Extension & Ancillary Infrastructure

The assessment of potential visual effects during the Operational Phase of the Active Travel Site Access Improvements and the extension of the existing parking provision considers the visual aesthetics of the widening of existing footpaths and road widening along the L2020 Local Road to allow for a shared cycle / pedestrian pathway, and the reconfiguration and extension of carpark areas to increase from 353 no. parking spaces to 509 no. parking spaces. These aspects of the Proposed Development comprise surface-level changes within areas of the landscape which are not destination sites but will be experienced by receptors while travelling in / out or within the site in motorised vehicles, cycling or walking.

VP8 represents “Low” sensitivity receptors who are motorists, cyclists or pedestrians experiencing the view along L2020 as they access the site. The footpath along L2020 will be widened, which will result in some loss of mature trees. To ameliorate this impact semi mature trees will be replaced behind the ball-stop netting. The height and style of ball-stop netting will be unified, and the re-developed link will benefit from enhanced safety and usability. For these reasons, the visual impact assessment determined a “Slight” magnitude of change in the view with an overall visual effect of “Not Significant.”

VP7 represents “Medium” sensitivity receptors who are motorists, cyclists or pedestrians using the car park. The perceptible change will occur mainly within the existing car park envelope and will comprise of rationalisation of car parking layout, re-surfacing, provision of additional shrub and tree planting and development of promenade and marina extension in the distant background. The magnitude of change is considered to be “Slight” and the significance of residual effects is considered to be “Slight.” The quality of the effect is considered to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive.”

Users of the carpark at the north end of the Proposed Development site (recall Plate 13-10 in Section 13.3.3.3 of the Landscape Baseline) are also considered “Low” sensitivity, due to the functional nature of this area, which is not a destination to come and experience landscape views. The extension of this car park area includes upgraded pedestrian walkways with improved safety, and integrates natural landscaping while improving biodiversity and aesthetics of the functional area.

On balance, the visual effects during the Operational Phase arising as a result of the access road enhancements, parking extension and ancillary works and infrastructure are predicted to be “Permanent,” “Direct” and “Positive,” with a significance rating of “Not Significant,” which is not significant in the context of EIA.

13.7.4 Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

The currently under-construction Yew Point Eco Cabins, which are distributed across different areas of the Yew Point peninsula within a 145-acre property site (recall Section 13.5), have the potential to combine with the Proposed Development to give rise to cumulative effects on the physical landscape of the Hodson Bay/Yew Point area. Both developments involve material alterations to the physical fabric of the same broad landscape and, as such, there is potential for cumulative landscape effects.

However, the developments are not directly adjacent. The closest element of Yew Point Eco Cabin development is located approximately 300m from the northernmost tip of the Planning Application Boundary for the Proposed Development (recall Figure 13-20 in Section 13.5); therefore, the material alterations are distributed across a relatively broad area. Moreover, the Proposed Development has placed a focus on improving and enhancing landscape character and the LVIA has determined that the quality of predicted landscape effects is likely to be “Neutral” to “Positive.” Overall, given the focus of improved landscape character and the distance between developments, it is not likely that significant cumulative landscape effects will occur.

With regard to cumulative visual effects, none are predicted to occur, as the Yew Point Eco Cabins and the Proposed Development will not be visible concurrently from same viewpoints due to screening effects of intervening vegetation between the two developments. An example of dense roadside screening on the northern part of L2020 where it connects between the two developments is provided below in Plate 13-12, illustrating the sense of seclusion and visual disconnect between the two development areas.



Plate 13-12 Dense roadside screening along the northern part of L2020 between the Proposed Development site and the site of Yew Point Eco Cabins

13.8 Conclusion

Desk studies, onsite visibility appraisal and visual impact assessment of photomontages determined that there will be very limited visibility of the Proposed Development beyond the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development site. The LVIA focused on the key aspects of the Water Sports Pavilion and the Marina Redevelopment and Extension, which constitute the largest footprints of change within the Proposed Development site, and are integrated with the shoreline and within the shallow water environment of Hodson Bay / Lough Ree / Shannon River Corridor. In addition, the LVIA focused on

the extensive landscaping changes associated with the Public Realm Upgrades aspect of the Proposed Development, which constitute material alterations to the landscape of the wider shoreline areas north and south of the water sports and marina sites. Additional aspects of the Proposed Development which primarily constitute surface-level changes were also given due consideration and assessment: the Active Travel Site Access Improvements along the L2020 Local Road, the extension of the existing parking provision located at the north end of the site and ancillary works and infrastructure including the installation of ball-stop netting up to 20m in height.

From a landscape perspective, the greatest impact is likely to be material changes to the composition and character of the lakeshore and shallow waters where new infrastructure is to be installed and where extensive landscaping is to be planted / managed. The LVIA determined that shoreline vegetation will be adequately preserved, thereby maintaining or enhancing the landscape character of the lakeshore, as a result of the Proposed Development. Selected mature trees and / or tree stands are to be removed along the L2020, primarily to facilitate widening of the access road, and the LVIA determined the quality of this effect to be “Neutral” overall, with no significant impacts.

From a visual perspective, the Proposed Development comprises a mix of surface-level to relatively tall infrastructure, including the new Water Sports Pavilion building, the multi-use pavilion, the café and service buildings, the plaza and terrace, and water access points of the developed shoreline. The LVIA determined that, importantly, the majority of long-distance views over Lough Ree are preserved and more opportunity to experience views is created by the addition of the proposed infrastructure. The visual effects are predicted to be primarily “Slight” and no higher than “Moderate,” owing to the overall “Positive” quality of most effects and the redevelopment and enhancement of already developed areas within a destination area of highly valued tourism. The LVIA determined that visual aesthetics will be improved compared to the current baseline conditions, along with benefits to landscape character and integration into the lakeshore environment of Lough Ree.

Regarding potential cumulative effects with the Yew Point Eco Cabins development, which is currently under construction, the LVIA determined that owing to the focus of improved landscape character within the Proposed Development, the distance between the two developments and intervening vegetation in between, it is not likely that significant cumulative impacts will occur.

To conclude, the likely landscape and visual effects anticipated from the Proposed Development are not deemed to be significant. Considering the zoning and current high-value recreational use of Hodson Bay and its surrounding landscape setting, residual effects upon the landscape and visual amenity are deemed to be acceptable and in line with the sustainable development of the area.