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CHAPTER 12: Landscape and Visual

Introduction

- 12.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) chapter describes the landscape context of the proposed development and assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts of the proposal on the receiving environment.
- 12.2 **Landscape Impact Assessment (LIA)** relates to assessing the effects of a development on the landscape as a resource in its own right and is concerned with how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character.
- 12.3 **Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)** relates to assessing effects of a development on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. This deals with how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements. Visual impacts may occur from; Visual Obstruction (blocking of a view, be it full, partial or intermittent) or; Visual Intrusion (interruption of a view without blocking).

Legislative and Policy Context

- 12.4 This assessment has been carried out with reference to the following legalisation, policy and guidelines:

Legislation

- Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (hereafter referred to as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive).
- The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, includes a definition of landscape as “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*”¹. The Act also includes a requirement that objectives relating to landscape should be included in development plans.
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.
- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- European Landscape Convention 2000 - Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention in 2002. The Convention promotes the protection, management and planning of landscapes.

Policy

- National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 - published “*to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change*”.
- Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

¹Defined In Article 1a of the European Landscape Convention

- Galway Landscape Character Assessment, May 2021.

Guidelines

- Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute, August 2024.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (hereafter referred to as the EPA Guidelines) (EPA 2022);
- The Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Assessing landscape value outside national designations (May 2021).
- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Specified Infrastructure Projects - Overarching Technical Document, Document No. PEENV- 01101, December 2020.
- Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals (2019) (under review April 2025).
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GEIA) (DHPLG 2018).
- Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 05/2017 (Revised 2018) on Townscape Character Assessment (hereafter referred to as the TCA) (Landscape Institute 2018).
- Environmental impact assessment of projects - Guidance on the preparation of the environmental impact assessment report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) (2017), European Commission.
- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA) 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013).
- DOE Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (June 2000).

12.5 While the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) provide a general methodology, impact ratings and assessment structure applicable across all environmental assessments, the GLVIA (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013) provides specific guidance for landscape and visual impact assessments. A combination of the approaches outlined in the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) and in the GLVIA (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013), and the professional experience and expertise of the assessor, is utilised in the landscape and visual assessment.

Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Assessment Methodology

12.6 Production of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- Identification of the study area.
- Desktop study to identify the relevant landscape designations in the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 as well as any potential scenic routes, views and prospects.
- Desktop study to identify the relevant Landscape Character Areas and Types set out in the Galway Landscape Character Assessment, May 2021.

- Desktop study to identify other sensitive visual receptors, including the relationship of the site to sites designated for nature conservation, national parks, designated landscapes, heritage sites, geological sites, protected structures, recreational and tourist areas and residential developments.
- Provisional identification of viewpoints based on results of desktop survey.
- Fieldwork to review and verify the desktop analysis of landscape character and to refine the set of viewpoints to be used for the visual assessment stage.
- Fieldwork to identify the landscape elements present on the site and within the study area.
- Use of full Frame Sensor camera with 50mm lens to capture visualisation from each selected viewpoint. Where a panorama is necessary to accurately represent the extent of a development, images are stitched together using photoshop.
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape impact of the development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact.
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact. This aspect of the assessment is supported by photomontages prepared in respect of the selected viewpoints.
- Where appropriate, incorporation of mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts and estimation of residual impacts once mitigation has become established.

Landscape Assessment Impact Criteria

- 12.7 Landscape' was defined in the European Landscape Convention (October 2000) as *"an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*. This takes into account landform, landcover, land use, settlement patterns, boundary treatments and the overall scale of the landscape. The character that is created by these elements may be affected by the viewpoint, the context of the viewer, the season and the tranquillity of the setting (e.g noise & disturbance). How these elements interact defines the intrinsic landscape character of a place. Understanding the character, quality and value of the landscape determines the sensitivity of that landscape to accommodate change through development. Landscape impact assessment therefore identifies the changes to this character which would result from the proposed development and assesses the significance of those effects on the landscape.
- 12.8 When assessing the potential impacts on the landscape resulting from a proposed development, the following criteria are considered:
- Landscape character, value and sensitivity;
 - Magnitude of likely impacts; and
 - Significance of landscape effects.
- 12.9 The sensitivity of the landscape to change is assessed as a combination of the degree to which a particular landscape receptor (Landscape Character Area (LCA) or feature) can accommodate changes or new elements without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics and the value attached to those elements. The value attached to a landscape is assessed based Table 1 of Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/21, which takes into account factors such as natural heritage, cultural heritage, landscape

condition, associations, distinctiveness, recreational value, scenic value, tranquillity and function. Landscape Sensitivity is classified using the criteria set out in Table 12-1

Table 12-1: Landscape Character, Value and Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at an international or national level (World Heritage Site/National Park), Landscape Conservation Areas, Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO), dark sky reserve landscapes, historic townscapes or tourist destinations as well as designated ecological landscapes (SAC, SPA, NHA, pNHA, etc where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at a national or regional level, containing nationally important (and in some cases regionally important) historical, ecological and socio-cultural features and where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character. Examples include Community, sports, and recreational landscapes which cannot be replaced locally. Notable high value landscape features that could not be replaced (e.g. distinctive wooded copse, historic boundaries). Landscape setting to high value cultural heritage features (archaeological and/or architectural).
Medium	Areas where the landscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are landscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Areas of landscape character that include derelict, mining, industrial land or are part of the urban fringe where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of landscape improvements and/or restoration to realise a higher landscape value.

12.10 The magnitude of landscape effects is evaluated by considering the degree of change as a consequence of the proposed development. This takes into account whether there is a loss of landscape elements within the application site and the broader study area. Magnitude is classified using the criteria set out in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**

Table 12-2: Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

Magnitude	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an extensive change of the landscape in terms of character, value and quality.

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

12.11 The significance of a landscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is determined based on the matrix set out in Table 12-3.

Table 12-3: Impact Significance Matrix

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

12.12 The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is determined using professional judgement and experience to review and adapt if/as necessary, providing a rationale for the basis of this. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be ‘significant impacts’ in EIA terms.

Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

12.13 Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views (primarily public views), the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on visual amenity. As with the landscape impact, the visual impact of the proposed development will be assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

12.14 The determination of the sensitivity of visual receptors is based on a combination of the value placed on each of the types of visual receptors and the susceptibility to change of each of

these. A further factor affecting visual sensitivity is the activity that the viewers are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape.

12.15 The determination of sensitivity of visual receptors is informed by the following:

- **Elevated and / or panoramic views.** This relates to the elevation and extent of the view.
- **Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity.** Remote and tranquil views tend to be static and therefore more sensitive to the introduction of active elements.
- **Degree of perceived naturalness.** Manmade features can appear incongruent in a setting that is considered to be very natural.
- **Presence of striking or noteworthy features.** Features such as a promontory headland, lough or castle can be highly valued, perhaps depicted in paintings and postcards.
- **Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance.** Visitors can attributed significance to such locations for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;
- **Rarity or uniqueness of the view.** Considers how unusual the landscape is on a local, regional and national level.
- **Integrity of the landscape character.** Considers the condition and intactness of the landscape.
- **Sense of place.** Considers whether the location has a perceived meaning to visitors.
- **Sense of awe.** Considers the impact of the view in terms of the sense of timelessness of nature.

12.16 Table 12-5 classifies the sensitivity of visual receptors:

Table 12-4: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valued views enjoyed within highly sensitive landscape areas – highly sensitive landscape designations are usually defined by a County’s Landscape Character Assessment which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan. • Tourist visitors to scenic viewpoint – The scenic value of the view can be defined by County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). • Viewers at very highly aesthetic views and vistas with lack of visual clutter and absence of visual and other disturbance. • Night-time views within dark sky reserves. • Occupiers of residential properties with a high level of visual amenity.
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users of an outdoor recreation feature which focuses on the landscape. • Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened. • Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. • Views from high usage public spaces, direct observers (e.g. views from local residential properties, residential care units with direct views to the development). • Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. • Views to and from local ridges, hills, high-points, buildings of note. • Views to and from sites of regional ecological and / or cultural interest. • Some visual discordance in streetscape. Traffic movements distracting visually but not predominant.

Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sports or recreation pass-times which do not offer or focus attention on landscape. • Occupiers of residential properties with a medium level of visual amenity. • Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. • Views to and from open spaces, local parks. • Views from sports and recreational facilities. • Views to and from sites of local ecological and / or cultural interest. • Views from general community, schools, institutional buildings, and associated outdoor areas. • Visual condition of the landscape may be degraded or dominated by traffic.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular commuters. • People at place of work. • Occupiers of residential properties with a low level of visual amenity.
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of dereliction and poor visual quality due to such elements as graffiti, vandalism, derelict and run-down buildings and structures and littering. • Views to and from degraded or abandoned urban or peri-urban landscapes or areas of dereliction with very low aesthetics value and little or no elements of interest. • Views to brownfield or damaged landscapes with no associations of note. Views dominated by transportation and other infrastructure of no aesthetics merit.

12.17 The magnitude of visual effects is determined on the basis of two factors; the visual presence of the proposal and its effect on visual amenity. Visual presence relates to how noticeable or visually dominant the proposal is within a particular view. This is determined by a number of factors, including its scale in relation to distance, the complexity of the view, as well as the degree of existing contextual movement experienced. The backdrop against which the development is presented and its relationship with other focal points or prominent features within the view is also considered. The magnitude of visual affects also takes into account the duration and reversibility of visual effects. The magnitude of visual impacts is classified in Table 12.5

Table 12-5: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

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

12.18 As with landscape impact, the significance of a visual impact is a function of sensitivity and magnitude. The significance of visual impacts is determined based on the matrix set out in Table 12-6.

Table 12-6: Impact Significance Matrix

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

- 12.19 Table 12-6 provides an indicative framework from which the significance of visual effects is determined. Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) recognises that professional judgement is an important part of the LVIA process. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. In all cases, judgements must be clear and transparent method so that the reasoning can be followed and examined by others. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be ‘significant impacts’ in EIA terms.
- 12.20 In addition to assessing the significance of landscape effects and visual effects, EPA Guidance for EIAs requires that the quality of the effects to be classified as negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial. This is because visual amenity is perceived by people and therefore subject to variations in the attitude and values of the receptor – one person’s attitude to a proposed development may differ from another’s. Additionally, in certain situations there may be a policy encouraging a particular development in an area, in which case the policy is effectively prescribing a degree of visual change. If the proposed development achieves the objective of the policy, the resulting effect might be considered positive, even if the landscape character of views are significantly altered. The classification of the quality of the landscape and visual effects seeks to take these variables into account and provide for a rational and robust assessment.

Characteristics Of The Proposed Development

- 12.21 The proposed development is described in detail in Chapter 3.0 (Project Description), a summary description is provided below.
- 12.22 The proposed development comprises:
- Extraction of rock from an area consisting of 4.35 hectares which was previously subject to rock extraction and all associated facilities/works to a final floor level of 4 mOD;
 - Lateral extension of the existing permitted quarry area over c.6.1 ha. area to the east and north of the existing quarry to a final floor level of 4 mOD;
 - Restoration of the application area to natural habitat after uses following completion of extraction;
 - all related ancillary development and associated site works including processing (crushing, screening and washing) and stockpiling of materials; provision of landscaped screening berms and all other related activities;
 - The proposed development is within an overall application area of c. 12 hectares and is for a total period of 25 years.
- 12.23 The proposed development would involve the stripping and removal of topsoil and overburden. These soils would be placed in storage berms around the perimeter of the proposed quarry extension or used for site restoration purposes in the existing quarry area.
- 12.24 The process for extraction of limestone would continue to comprise conventional drilling and blasting. The material would then be loaded onto dump trucks and taken to the existing processing plant within the existing permitted quarry. Industry standard slope angles, bench heights, and bench widths would be used for extraction operations at the site.
- 12.25 The materials produced would continue to comprise limestone aggregates, which would continue to be stockpiled prior to transportation to market. There are approximately 5.5 million tonnes of rock available for extraction in the proposed lateral quarry extension area.
- 12.26 The maximum extraction rate at the quarry is in the region of 400,000 tonnes per annum with the current rate of extraction lower than this. The applicant is seeking a 25 year permission in order to extract the available reserve.
- 12.27 Surface water would be managed in accordance with the 2023 discharge licence granted by Galway County Council under reference w/502/22.
- 12.28 A mobile double skinned fuel bowser will continue to be used to refuel the plant on the quarry floor. During any refuelling of plant on the quarry floor a drip tray is used and a Spill Kit on hand also in case of any accidental spillages.
- 12.29 The operational life of the quarry will cease when the material supply has been exhausted. Following this, it is proposed to allow water to rebound to its natural level and restore the site to natural habitat uses, with the retained topsoil and overburden used in this process.
- 12.30 The proposal would not require the provision of any additional facilities or machinery, all existing facilities, including buildings, wheel washing, fuel storage and waste management facilities would be maintained as existing.
- 12.31 The quarry would continue to operate 07:00 – 20:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 – 16:00 Saturday. No operations would take place on Sundays or public holidays.

12.32 The proposed development will provide continued direct employment for approximately 30 people, with additional indirect employment provided for sub-contractors, hauliers and service providers.

12.33 The material excavated on site will be used in the building industry in the region, therein helping to sustain existing employment in the local and regional construction industry.

Baseline Conditions

Study Area

12.34 The Study Area on which the LVIA focuses is set out in Figure 12.1, extending to include all areas within which potential landscape and visual effects are considered most likely to occur. The boundary which defines the Study Area was selected on a realistic and pragmatic basis, based on a desk top study, which included an examination of aerial photography and ordnance survey mapping, as well as Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping. ZTV mapping is based on contour mapping and therefore does not take into account land cover such as vegetation, buildings and boundary treatments. As a consequence, a series of site visits was undertaken during both summer and winter months to establish the potential visibility of the site from the surrounding landscape.

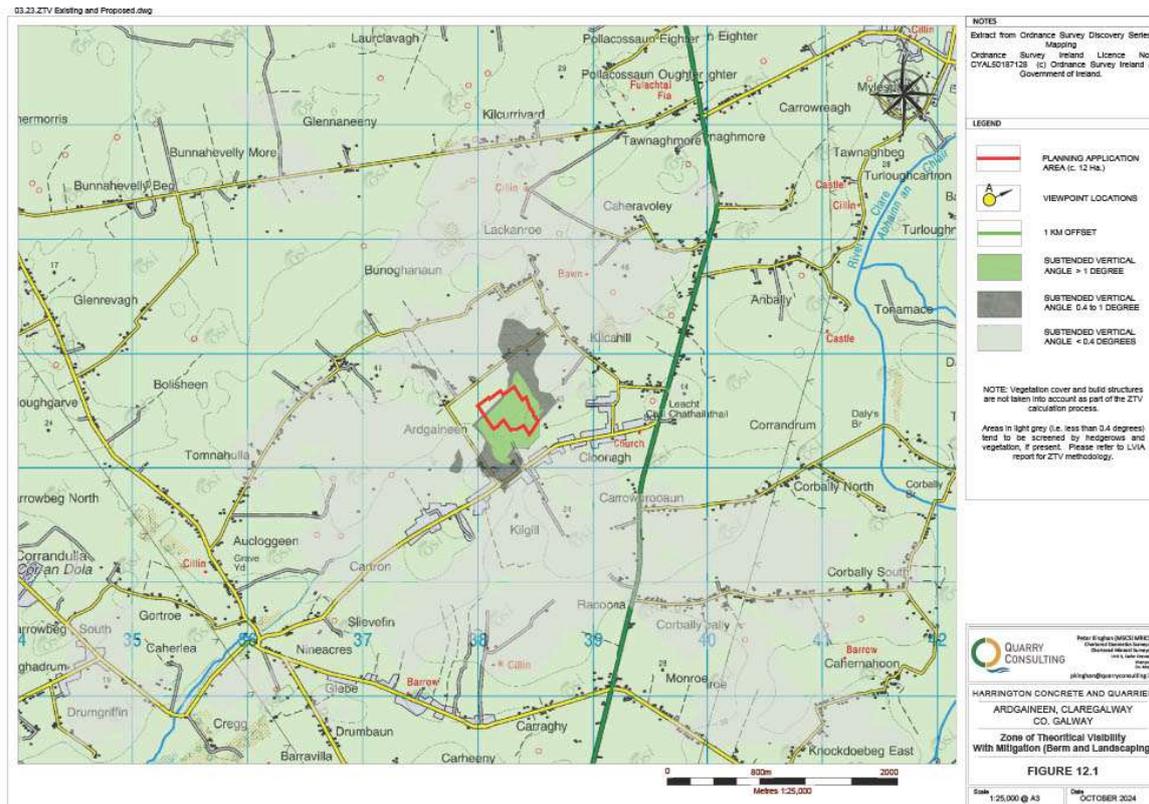


Figure 12-1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 12.35 The landscape baseline represents the existing landscape context and is the scenario against which any changes to the landscape context brought about by the proposed development will be assessed in terms of direct physical impacts on landform and land cover and also impacts on prevailing landscape character.
- 12.36 A description of the landscape context of the site and surrounding area is provided below covering landscape and planning policy, landform and drainage, vegetation and land use, settlement patterns, transport routes and public amenities and facilities. Many of the landscape elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places and transport routes from which viewers can potentially see the proposed development. Of relevance to this assessment is the inclement weather (which is commonplace in this region) which can affect visibility.

County Galway Landscape Character Assessment

- 12.37 A landscape appraisal of County Galway is set out in Appendix 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) – of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. The Landscape Character Appraisal describes the county in terms of the landscape character types present and divides the county into Landscape Regions and Landscape Units with the visual sensitivity of these units set out. The Landscape Character Assessment also identifies a number of protected views and scenic routes within the County.

- 12.38 The proposed development site is located in *The Eastern Plans*, which is described as:

.....underlain by younger softer rocks. This derives most of its character from the covering blanket of glacial soils that give rise to extensive, level plains of grasslands, with many areas of bog in the north.

- 12.39 The proposed development is located within the *Central Galway Complex* Landscape Character Type (Type 6)– which is described as:

An extensive plain of grasslands comprising of medium-to-large fields with low enclosures and many areas of low stone walls used for field boundaries. It also includes distinctive features, including locally elevated features, such as Knockma, south -west of Tuam as well as areas that overlook Lough Corrib in the west and the complex of lakes and foothills between Gort and Loughrea in the south. This area contains the majority of the county's population with associated high levels of urban generated rural housing, roads and settlements. These range from large to small settlements with associated infrastructure, services and commercial activity. The western and southern parts of these landscapes are underlain by karst limestone which results in many unusual hydrological features - such as turloughs and large springs. The more productive soils of this area have resulted in long histories of more intensive historic settlement and associated higher concentrations of remains from major periods of land - management, including early Christian, medieval and 16th - 19th century estates. This historic pattern of settlement has resulted in elevated concentration of archaeological, architectural and cultural remains. Features from different periods of land management and settlement are often found in close proximity. Examples of sites with many periods include Pallas, Eyrecourt and Garbally Park.

- 12.40 Sensitivities within this area are identified as “open countryside offers frequent extensive panoramic views from local high points”.

- 12.41 Landscape Character Type 6 is subdivided into 5 Landscape Character Units, the application is located within *Unit 6a Black River Basin*, which is described as follows:

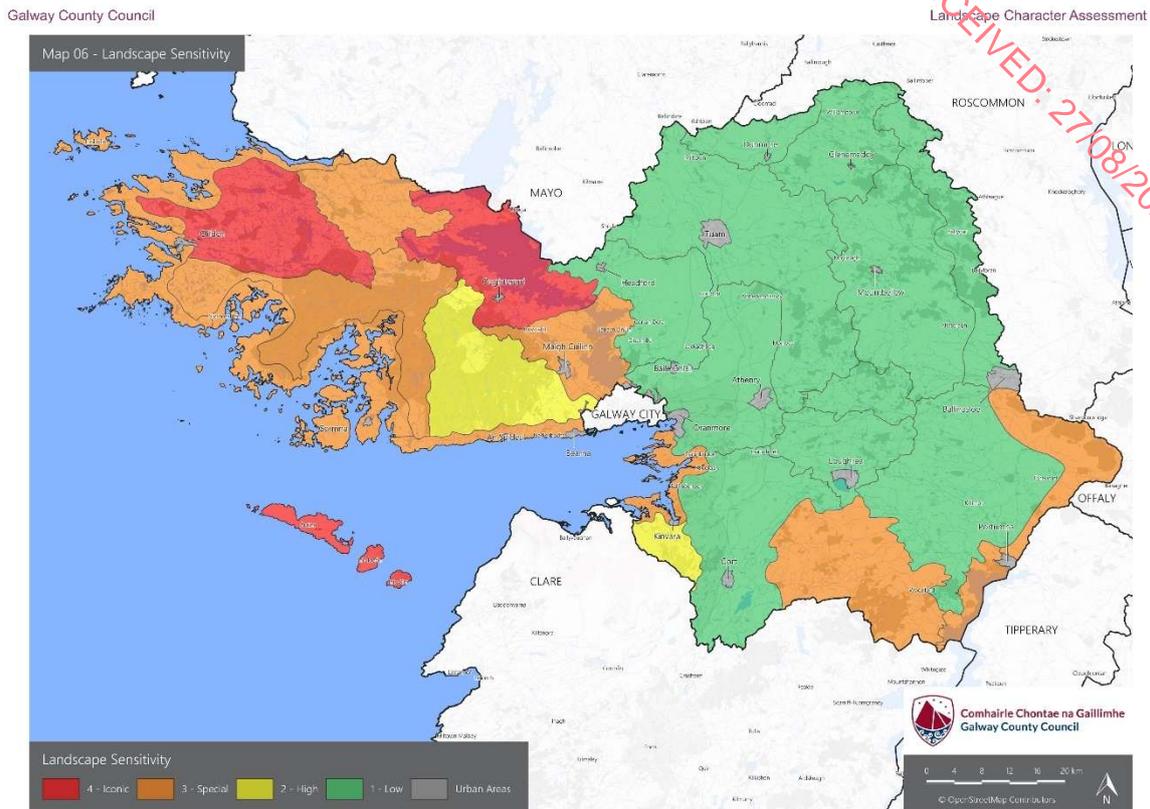
Undulating long-occupied working landscape with high levels of settlement. Large regular fields and numerous parkland remnants. Low enclosure except for localised areas of mature parkland trees.

- 12.42 The Landscape Character Assessment provides a sensitivity assessment of the County taking into account factors such as “*elevation, slope, land-cover and soil*”, the sensitivity of the county ranges from Class 1 “low” to Class 2 “high”, Class 3 “special” and Class 4 “iconic”. The application site and Central Galway Complex Type has been assigned a sensitivity rating of “low”, which is “*unlikely to be adversely affected by change*”. Section 4.6 of the Landscape Character Assessment however notes:

It should be noted that individual projects in any landscape area, notwithstanding its dominant sensitivity rating, may have greater or lesser impacts on the visual quality and character of the landscape depending on the details of the project design and the specific characteristics of the site and its context. Therefore, this section should be read in conjunction with the policies, objectives and development management standards of the Galway County Development Plan (2022 - 2028). The planning authority will consider this sensitivity rating and may, depending on the nature of the site and development require the applicants to demonstrate that the proposed development addresses the sensitivities identified for each relevant landscape type. In this respect, applicants may be required to prepare Visual Impact Assessment, photomontages etc. to the satisfaction of the Council prior to the making of any decision in respect to a planning application.

- 12.43 52 *Protected Views* are set out in Section 6 of the Landscape Character Assessment and are identified on map 08. There are no protected views in the immediate vicinity of the site and the site is not visible from any protected views. The nearest view is View 31, which is situated at Kilbeg Pier on the eastern shore of Upper Lough Corrib, over 14km west of the application site.
- 12.44 8 *Scenic Routes* are set out in Section 7 of the Landscape Character Assessment. There are no scenic routes in the immediate vicinity of the site and the site is not visible from any scenic routes. The nearest route is the Galway Bay Scenic Route, which at its nearest point is over 14km south of the application site.

Figure 12-2: Map 06 Landscape Sensitivity



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County Galway Development Plan 2022 - 2028

12.45 The following policies of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 are of relevance to the application:

LCM 1: Preservation of Landscape Character

Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement, where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

LCM 2: Landscape Sensitivity Classification

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.

LCM 3: Landscape Sensitivity Ratings

Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.

LCM 5: Prospecting and Mining

It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to give careful consideration in exceptional circumstances for prospecting or mining for gold, silver or base metals in landscapes class 3 or 4.

Landform and Drainage

- 12.46 Due to the karst nature of the underlying geology, surface water features are generally absent from the study area. The proposed development lies partly in the drainage system for the Greeg River, which at its closest point is situated 1.4km southwest of the application site. The river flows in a northeast – southwest direction through the relatively flat landscape to Lough Corrib at Muchrush, approximately 10.5km to the southwest of the site. The northwestern section of the application site lies in the drainage system for the Clare River, which at its closest point is situated 3km to the east. The Clare River flows in a southerly direction from this point, through Claregalway and then westwards to Lough Corrib.
- 12.47 The site has an elevation ranging from approximately 32m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) along the northern boundary to approximately 42m AOD in the southeast. Beyond the site the landscape is broadly flat with subtle undulations comprising of a series of low hills reaching up to 46m AOD encircling the site and the townlands of Kilgill, Cloonag, Kilcahill and Ardgaineen (within which the application site is situated). The wider landscape is typical of this character.

Vegetation and Landuse

- 12.48 The application site is presently partly in agricultural use, adjoining the existing limestone quarry which has a planning history dating back to 1977 and a corresponding history of extraction. Surrounding the site, the predominant land cover comprises agricultural land (pasture) with field boundaries defined by stone walls and hedgerows typically comprised of hawthorn and blackthorn. The eastern boundary of the existing quarry is marked in part by a row of mature *leylandii*, which align the local road for a stretch of approximately 200m.
- 12.49 There are few changes in vegetation within the surrounding landscape, with small patches of woodland noted to the east at Kilcahill and to the north at Knockaraha. Large areas of peatbog (mostly cutover) are noted in the wider landscape to the south-west, including at Annfield and to the north-east, including at Ballinderry north, where small patches of conifer plantation were noted on parts of the cutover bog.

Centres of Population and Houses

- 12.50 Residences within the general area consist of a one-off rural houses, typically arranged as ribbon development along the local road network. This is particularly apparent along the L6182 to the south of the site which has a long history of this form of development evident on the Historic 6 inch and 25 inch maps. There are also examples of more dispersed dwellings and farmsteads in the vicinity of the site, including along the local road to the west and north of the site.
- 12.51 Larger centres of population comprise Claregalway, which is situated approximately 8km south of the site and Tuam, which is approximately 12km north. Galway City which is a major centre for employment, commerce and population is situated approximately 17km south of the site.

Transport routes

- 12.52 Access to the site is provided via an existing private access, which adjoins the L6182 at a T-junction. The existing extraction area is within approximately 230m of the L6182. In the immediate vicinity of the site, the L6182 comprises a marked single carriage, one laned road.
- 12.53 The site is strategically located close to the national road network (N83, N84, M6 and M17), the closest of which, the N83 is situated within 1.1km of the site.

12.54 An unnamed local road runs immediately to the west and north of the site. At its closest point, the road adjoins the western boundary of the existing quarry development and is within approximately 130m of the existing northern boundary.

Utilities

12.55 There are two 110kV 50Hz lines within the study area: Cashla – Dalton and Cashla – Cloon 110KV lines, which are situated approximately 2.8km west and 2.2km east of the site respectively. The Cloon – Headford – Tuam South – Claregalway 38KV line is situated approximately 1.3km east of the site. Overhead minor lines are present throughout the study area, serving domestic and commercial properties.

12.56 The Carrickeeny 8MW Windfarm is located approximately 3km west of the application site. A planning application for 8 no. wind turbines and associated works is currently being considered by An Bord Plenana (PA07.319307) at Laurclavagh and adjacent townlands, approximately 2.8km north of the application site.

12.57 Communications infrastructure comprise local network wires, cables, poles and masts for the provision of telephone, internet, mobile phone, television and radio services. Communications infrastructure is present throughout the study area.

12.58 There is no telecommunication infrastructure within the application site. The existing quarry benefits from existing telecommunication connections.

Public Amenities and Facilities

12.59 Tourism in county Galway is predominately focused on areas of the county to the west and south of the application site, including Galway City, Lough Corrib, Connemara and the Galway coast. The range of tourist offerings in these location include beaches, mountain hiking, Connemara National Park, freshwater and coastal fishing.

12.60 The nearest primary school (Corrandrum National School) is situated on the L6182, approximately 1km to the east of the site. A wider range of facilities and services including schools, community centres, sports facilities, public houses, restaurants, cafes and are available in the nearby towns and in Galway City.

Nature Conservation Designations

12.61 The proposed development site does not lie within or adjacent to any area designated for nature conservation. There are three European designated sites within approximately 15km of the site:

- Lough Corrib SAC (000297) - 2.5km east of the site at its nearest point.
- Lough Corrib SPA (004042) – 6.9km south-west of the site at its nearest point.
- Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) - 14.9km south of the site at its nearest point.

Archaeological Sites

12.62 The following archaeological features are noted within 500m of the site:

- GA157. GA057-166: Barrow - ring-barrow.
- GA057-165: Souterrain.

- 12.63 There are two dark sky locations in Ireland; the Kerry International Dark Sky Reserve on the Iveragh Peninsula and the Mayo Dark Sky Park, encompassing the Wild Nephin National Park. The latter is the closest designation to the site, located approximately 78km to the north-west.
- 12.64 Sources of light pollution in the vicinity of the site comprise the Claregalway and Galway City.

Visual Baseline

Identification of Viewpoints

- 12.65 The visual baseline identifies locations where people engaged in particular activities or resident in particular settings will be afforded potential views of the proposed development and which may impact on their visual amenity. Only those parts of the receiving environment that potentially afford views of the proposed development are of concern to this section of the assessment, this is known as the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI).
- 12.66 An initial site visit was undertaken to refine the list of viewpoints based on the ZVI and ZTV and informed by previous work that had been undertaken. The initial site visit was undertaken on December 2023. Subsequent site visit were undertaken on 14th and 18th April 2024 from which images were selected to illustrate the potential visual effect of the development.
- 12.67 A series of representative viewpoints were selected to illustrate typical views towards the existing and proposed development. Viewpoints were selected to reflect the range of view types available of the application site, including close-up and distant views, views from amenity and heritage resources, views consistent with those of residents and views from transport routes. The majority of viewpoints selected occur within a 2km radius of the site. Figure 12-3 illustrates the location of the selected viewpoints.
- 12.68 In accordance with Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013, the viewpoints selected are from publicly accessible areas. It is acknowledged that there is potential further visibility of the application site from agricultural land and private residential gardens in the immediate vicinity of the site, however as these are not publicly accessible, viewpoints close to those locations were selected wherever possible.

Figure 12-3: Viewpoint Locations

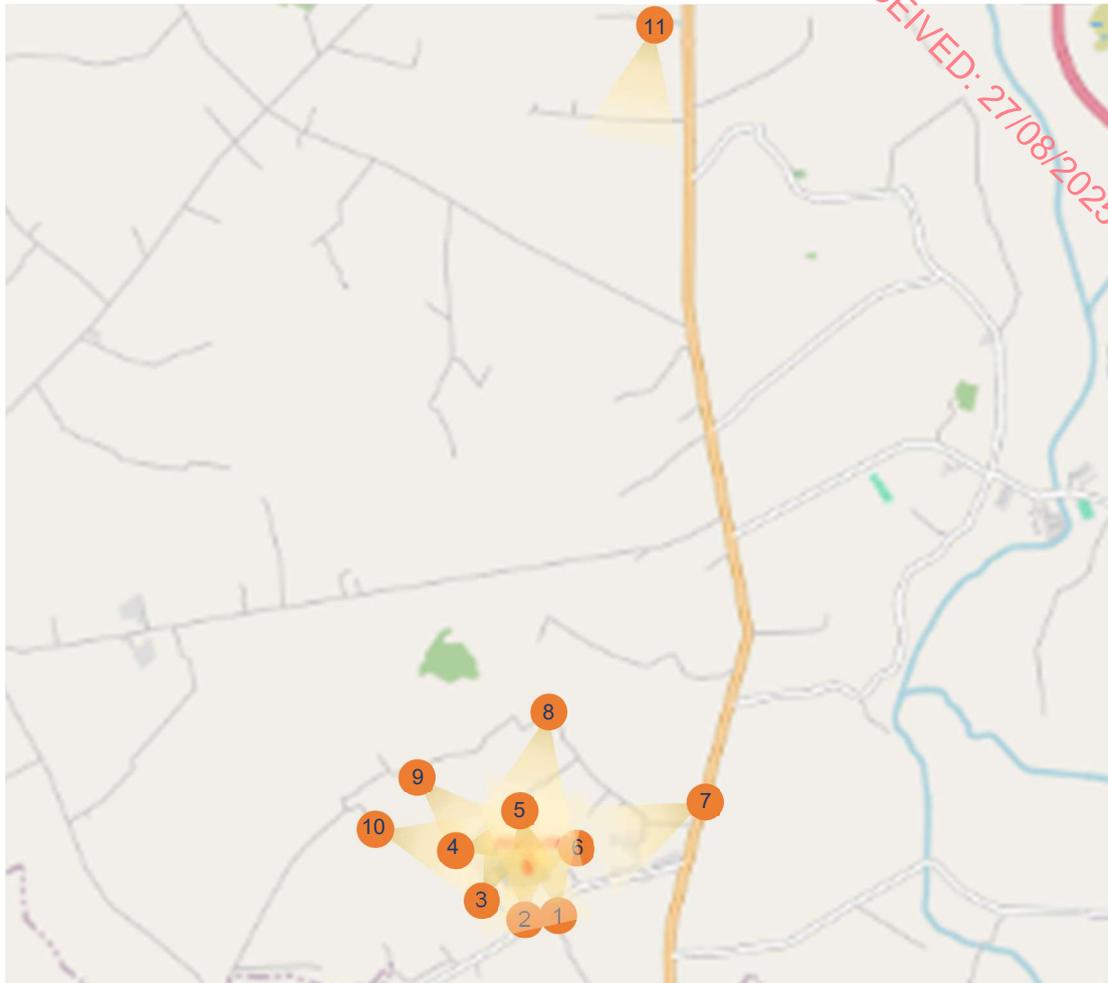


Table 12-7: Description of Viewpoint Locations.

VRP No.	Location	Direction of view
VP1	L6182 at access south west of application site	North-east
VP2	L6182, south-west of application site	North-east
VP3	Local road south-west of site at Ardgaineen	East
VP4	Local Road north-west of site at Ardgaineen	South-west
VP5	Local Road north of site at Ardgaineen	South
VP6	Local Road north east of site at Kilcahill	South-west
VP7	N83 east of site at Anbally	West
VP8	Local Road north of site at Kilcahill	South
VP9	Local Road north of site at Bunoghanaun	South
VP10	Local Road north west of site at Tomnahulla	South-east
VP11	Local Road north of site at Glenafosha	South

Assessment of Potential Effects

Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects

Sensitivity of Landscape to Change

Landscape Elements

- 12.69 The site partly comprises a patchwork of small agricultural fields that adjoin the existing quarry and which are divided by a series of field boundaries, defined by a mix of stone walls and vegetation. These field boundaries comprise the main landscape elements that defined the character of the site, though it should be noted that their setting is strongly influenced by the presence of the existing quarry.
- 12.70 The landscape elements do not make a significant contribution to the overall aesthetic of this part of Co. Galway, though they do make a contribution to a very local area to the north of the site. In this area their primary value is associated with their function i.e. screening of the existing extraction works from the local road immediately north of the site, though the gappy nature of the field boundaries within the site currently affords some opportunities for views into the existing quarry from immediately to the north.

Landscape Character

- 12.71 The site is contained within an attractive landscape setting, but not necessarily a vulnerable one. The County Galway Landscape Character Assessment of the CDP highlights that this is an area is a “*busy working landscape*”. The assessment also recognises that the area has the capacity to absorb development as it has been assigned a “low” landscape sensitivity due in part the prevailing landcover and topography, with very few high points over 100m AOD in the surrounding area.
- 12.72 Large proportions of County Galway, particularly to the west have been assigned a higher landscape sensitivity, including Lough Corrib to the west of the site, which has been assigned a Landscape Sensitivity of “Special”. These more sensitive areas are more vulnerable to change and cannot comfortably accommodate this type of development without more significant landscape effects. Also in contrast to these more sensitive locations, the area does not offer a significant resource for recreational visitors or tourists.
- 12.73 Overall, it is considered that this a robust, working landscape in rural Galway, where quarrying is an existing activity and on balance the factors outlined above, the sensitivity of the site including the individual elements and the overall landscape character is deemed to be **low**.

Low	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
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Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Landscape Elements

- 12.74 The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 820m of hedgerows and 916m of stone wall. The effect of this change would be very localised – visible within the site boundaries and from small area to the north of the site.
- 12.75 In the short to medium term, soils and overburden would be removed from within the site to enable extraction. The soil and overburden would be retained for future restoration of the

quarry. The effect of this change would be very localised – visible within the site boundaries and from small area to the north of the site.

- 12.76 The material would be extracted from the site in a phased basis and as a consequence the existing excavation area will be altered gradually over time, broadly working from south-west to north-east. The extent of this effect of this would be very localised – visible within the site boundaries and from small area to the north of the site.

Landscape Character

- 12.77 During the “operational phase”, the proposed development would result in the removal of the sub-surface limestone. Although soil cover is minimal, with some rock outcropping occurring, the effect of the removal of the limestone will be minimal in landscape character terms in the long term. In the short to medium term, the existing sub-surface limestone would become visible within a new quarry face. The extent of this effect of this would be very localised - within the site boundaries and on a small stretch of the local road to the north of the site.

- 12.78 In addition to the physical disturbance of the landform and land cover, the proposed development would result in a transfer of activity from the existing quarry to the application site (the total level of activity across both the existing and proposed quarry would remain unchanged). This change would predominately comprise the introduction of machinery associated with the excavation processes into this part of the site. It should be noted that as the proposed development represents an extension to an existing quarry, the area is already associated with such activity. The scale and intensity of the proposed development will not have a noticeable influence on the wider landscape, the extent of the effect will be a very localised – within the site boundaries and on small stretch of the local road to the north of the site.

- 12.79 The main effect of the proposed extension on landscape character would therefore be the extension of the operational life of the existing quarry, resulting in machinery operating at the site and trucks entering and exiting the site for an additional 25 years. Such truck movements are not typically associated with visual impacts, but they do relate to the sense of tranquillity and amenity of viewers. Truck movements represent a long-established feature of productive activity in this area. The majority of quarry machinery will be screened from view as it will be operating within the quarry void and the site benefits from a high degree of screening from the majority of view points.

- 12.80 In terms of duration, the operational stage landscape effects will be long term in accordance with EPA definitions.

- 12.81 On balance of the factors outlined above, the magnitude of landscape impact during the operational phase is deemed to be **Low**.

Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements that would lead to discernible changes in landscape character, and quality.
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- 12.82 With reference to the significance matrix (Table 12-3) above, the **low** landscape sensitivity judgement attributed to the landscape coupled with a **low** magnitude of landscape impact during both construction and operational phases is considered to result in a **slight/imperceptible** significance of landscape impact.

- 12.83 Table 12-8 provides a summary description of the likely landscape effects based on table 3.4 of EPA(2022).

Table 12-8: Assessment Summary based on EPA 2022

Description of Effect	Evaluation	Comment
Quality	Negative	Whilst an evaluation of “negative” has been assigned to the assessment, it should be noted that the site is located immediately adjacent to the existing quarry, which already exerts a strong influence over it’s character.
Extent	Local	The effect on landscape elements is restricted to within the site boundary, while the effect on the overall landscape character is somewhat broader, though still limited to the local area. The most notable change would comprise the increase activity at the site access and the introduction of activity into an area that is presently agricultural fields.
Probability	Likely	The effects described above can reasonably be expected to occur.
Duration	Long-term	The projected life of the quarry is 25 years.
Frequency	Daily	The quarry would operate Monday – Saturday.
Significance	Slight – imperceptible	6.1 ha of land would be altered from an agricultural field to a quarry, however the change would only be noticeable from a very localised area. The site would appear busier than existing with machinery operating within and with the potential for visible lights during winter months. The overall level of activity at the quarry would not increase, but the area over which quarrying occurs would alter. These changes would be noticeable though without significant consequences.

Assessment of Potential Visual Effects

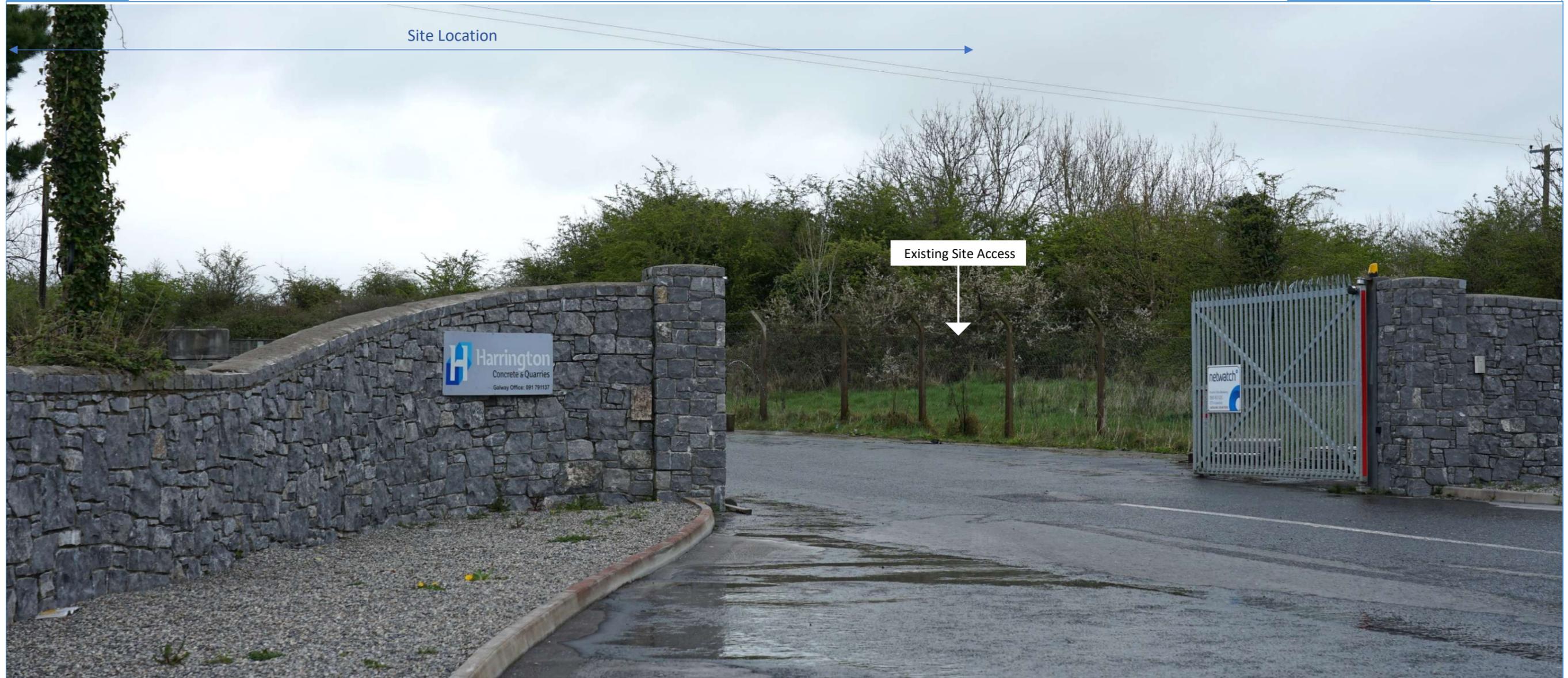
12.84 Table 12-9 below provides a detailed assessment of the visual effect of the proposed development, including clarification on the sensitivity and magnitude ratings and correspondingly the significance of the effects for each of the viewpoints selected and identified in Figure 12-3 above.

12.85 The extent to which the development is likely to result in a negative visual intrusion is determined by a number of factors:

- The extent of the proposed development, what is the site size.
- The contrast in colour between the faces of the sand and gravel pit in comparison to the surrounding land uses.
- The scale of buildings or plant that may appear incongruous due to their scale or colour.
- The level of activity at the site, is there night time activity and associated lighting.
- Is there likely to be dust deposition that would be notable along public roads.

Table 12-7: Description of Viewpoint Locations.

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP1 L6182 at access south west of application site	The view is comprised the entrance gate and adjoining walls serving the existing quarry operation. Some vegetation is visible beyond the gates, but no operational quarry areas are visible.	Low - Local road used for access to residential properties and local school, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible - The existing quarry is largely screened from the majority of the L6182 by intervening vegetation along field boundaries and domestic boundaries. The most visible element of the existing development is the existing site access, though it does not appear incongruous in the context of its surroundings, particularly due to the strong linear nature of the L6182, which directs the visual focus either eastwards or westwards along its length and away from the quarry. The proposed development will be imperceptible from the L6182. The continued use of the access by quarry traffic would represent the most visible element of the proposed development. Such truck movements are not typically associated with visual impacts, but they do relate to the sense of tranquillity and amenity of viewers. Truck movements represent a long-established feature of productive activity in this area. Verges appear largely clear from dust deposition, though it should be noted that field work was undertaken during December 2023 and April 2024 after prolonged periods of rainfall.	Quality Extent Probability Frequency Duration Reversibility Photomontage	Neutral Local Likely Daily Long-term Reversible Not required
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a negligible magnitude, corresponds to an imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.				
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.				



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP2 L6182, south-west of application site	The view includes a number of the existing sheds associated with the quarry operation. The conifer trees that align the western boundary of the operation is visible on the left of the image. The application site is not visible.	Low - Local road used for access to residential properties and local school, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible - Low – The existing quarry is largely screened from the majority of the L6182 by intervening vegetation along field boundaries and domestic boundaries. Elements of the existing quarry are visible from parts of L6182 through gaps in the existing hedgerow to the south-west of the existing access. The most prominent features are the sheds, which appear agricultural in form, and therefore not incongruous, though are of a larger scale. The proposed development would not be visible from this viewpoint. It is noted that the view experienced from the residential dwelling visible within VP2 may be altered by the proposed development, though the context would remain as adjoining a quarry.	Quality Extent Probability Frequency Duration Reversibility Photo montage	Negative Local Likely Daily Long-term Reversible Not required
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to a Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be not significant .				
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.				



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP3	Local road south-west of site at Ardgaineen	Low - Local road used for access to residential properties, not within an area of high visual amenity	Low – The existing quarry and its associated infrastructure are visible from parts of the local road. The most prominent features are the sheds, which appear agricultural in form, and therefore not incongruous, though stock-piles of material are also visible in parts. The proposed development would not be visible from this location south-west of the application site as it would be obscured by the existing quarry development. The main effect would therefore comprise the continuation of this existing visual effect as a consequent of the extension of the life of the quarry.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
				Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	Not required
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Low magnitude, corresponds to an slight-Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be slight .				
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.				



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP4	Local Road north-west of site at Ardgaheen	Low – Local road used for access to residential properties, not within an area of high visual amenity	Low – The existing quarry and its associated infrastructure are visible from parts of the local road. The most prominent features are the sheds, silos and other infrastructure which are relatively conspicuous at this viewpoint. Glimpses of quarried material and the existing quarry face are perceptible beyond the buildings, though these visually recede due to the colour and their low elevation. The proposed development would extend the quarried area visible from this location, with the extension visible as glimpses between the existing north-west to south-east aligned hedgerows. Verges appear largely clear from dust deposition in this location.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long -term
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Low magnitude, corresponds to an slight-imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be slight .			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	Mitigation measures can reduce the potential visible effects - a screening berm is recommended along the northern boundary of the application site, with additional planting to soften that boundary. The proposed measures will reduce the visibility of the proposed quarry extension, though parts of the southern face would remain visible until vegetation matures.			Photomontage	Required



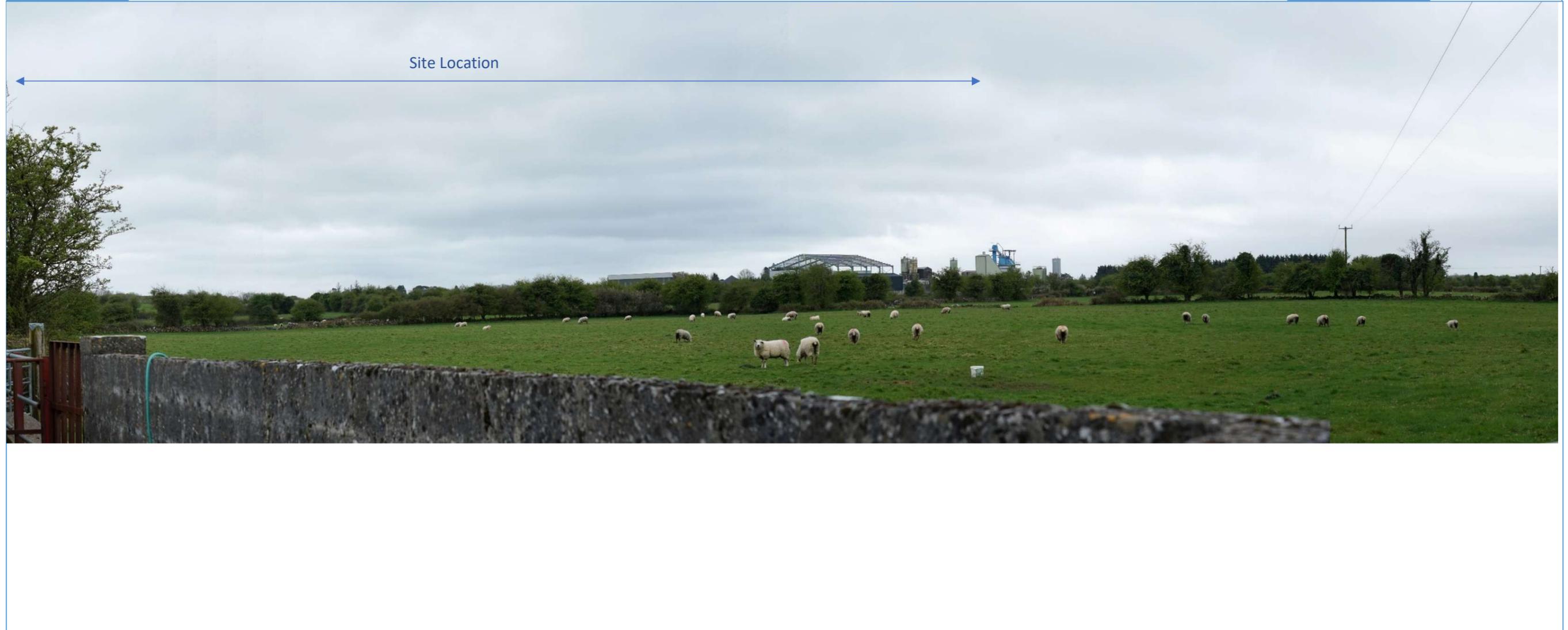
Viewpoint 4 Photomontage Before Mitigation



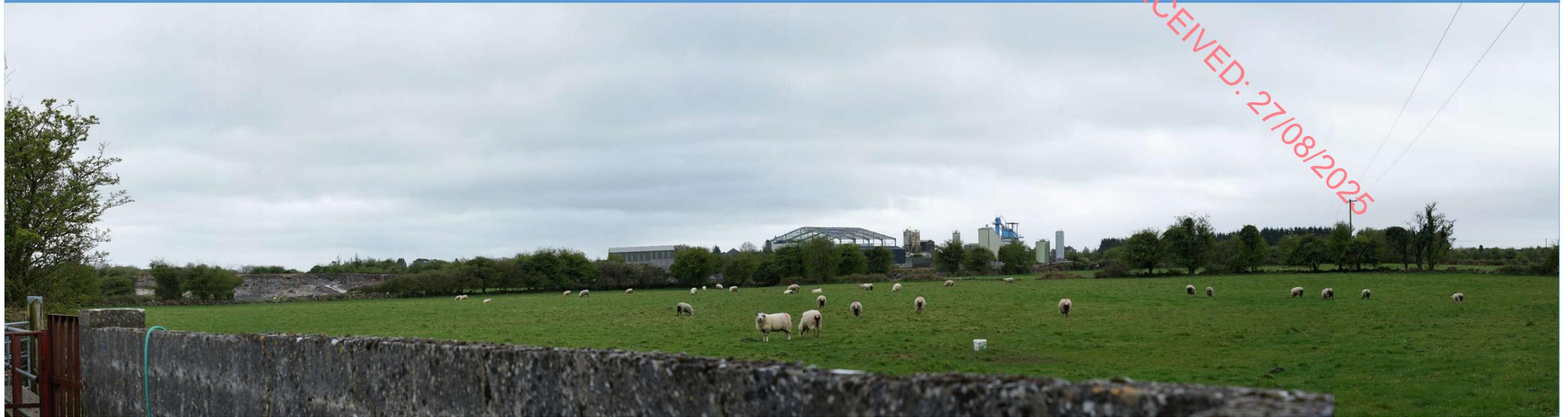
Viewpoint 4 Photomontage After Mitigation



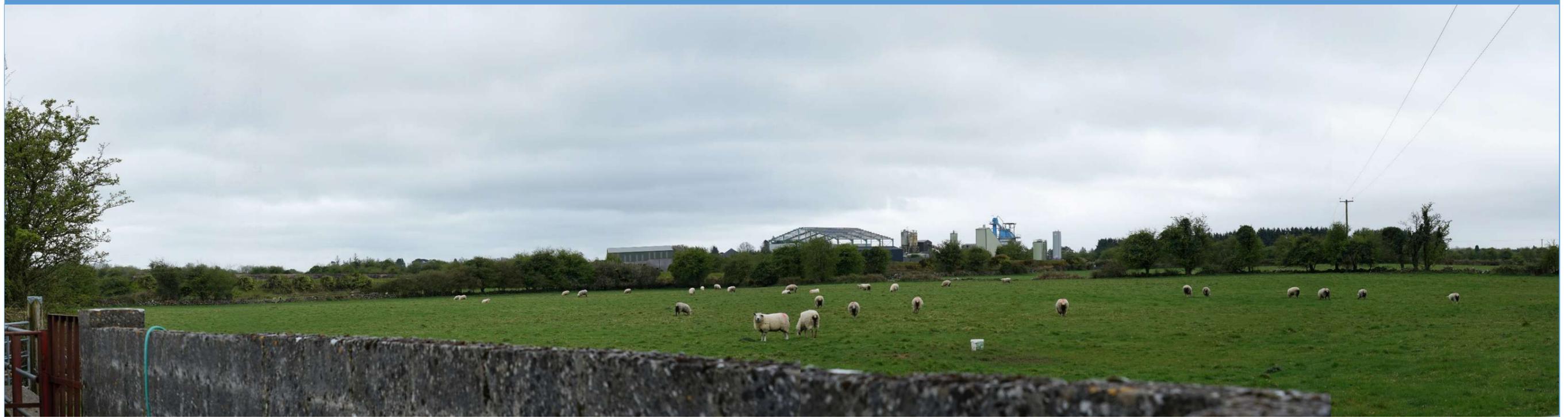
VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP5 Local Road north of site	The view is comprised of agricultural land, with elements of the existing quarry operation at the centre and right of the image. The application site is visible, though only as glimpses through hedgerow vegetation.	Low – Local road used for access to residential properties, not within an area of high visual amenity	Low – The existing quarry and its associated infrastructure are visible from parts of the local road. The most prominent features are the sheds, silos and other buildings though road side vegetation restricts open views along much of the route. Glimpses of quarried material and the existing quarry face are perceptible from this viewpoint, though these visually recede due to the colour and their low elevation. The proposed development would extend the quarried area visible from this location, with the extension visible as glimpses between the existing north-west to south-east aligned hedgerows. Verges appear largely clear from dust deposition.	Quality Extent Probability Frequency Duration	Negative Local Likely Daily Long-term
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Low magnitude, corresponds to an slight-Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be slight .			Reversibility Photomontage	Reversible Required
Mitigation	Mitigation measures can reduce the potential visible effects - a screening berm is recommended along the northern boundary of the application site, with additional planting to soften that boundary. The proposed measures will effectively eliminate the visibility of the proposed quarry extension.				



Viewpoint 5 Photomontage Before Mitigation



Viewpoint 5 Photomontage After Mitigation



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP6 Local Road north-east of site	The view is comprised of agricultural land, with glimpses of the higher elements of the existing quarry operation at the centre right of the image. The application site largely screened by existing hedgerow vegetation and stone walls.	Low – Local road used for access to residential properties, not within an area of high visual amenity	Low – The existing quarry and its associated infrastructure is visible from parts of the local road. The most prominent features are the sheds, silos and other taller elements though boundary vegetation restricts open views along much of the route. Glimpses of quarried material are perceptible from this viewpoint, though these visually recede due to the colour. The proposed development would extend the quarried area potentially visible from this location, however due to a combination of the topography and the existing boundary walls and planting, it is not anticipated that the area of the quarry extension would be visible from this location.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Low magnitude, corresponds to an slight-imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be slight .			Duration	Long-Term
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered, the existing north-west to south-east aligned hedgerows provide effective visual screening.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	Not required

Site Location



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP7 N83 east of site at Corrandrum	The view is comprised of agricultural land, with associated sheds and stone walls. A number of dwellings are visible. Glimpses of the higher elements of the quarry operation are visible.	Low – Route used by commuters and residents, though not of high amenity value.	Negligible - Views of both the existing quarry and application site are largely screened from the N83 by surrounding topography and developments. There are some glimpsed views of the higher elements of the existing quarry, notably the sheds and conveyers, however these do not appear conspicuous or incongruous in this landscape. The N83 is a high speed linear route with panoramic views. The scale of the existing development is diminutive in this context. The proposed development would not be discernible from this viewpoint.	Quality	Neutral
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to an Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be not significant .			Duration	Long-Term
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	Not required.



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP8	Local Road north of site at Bunoghanaun	Low - Low use local road, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible – Views of both the existing quarry and application site are largely screened from this location by topography, vegetation and intervening developments. There are some views of the higher elements of the existing development, notably the sheds, however these do not appear incongruous or out of scale from this viewpoint. The blue colour of the silos and conveyor are the most conspicuous feature of the existing quarry operation. The proposed development would not be visible from here due to the intervening vegetation, topography and development.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-Term
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to an Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be slight.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Photomontage	Not required



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation	
VP9	Local Road north of site at Glennaneeny	The view is comprised of agricultural land, with associated stone walls. A single dwelling is visible. The application site is screened by topography, vegetation and stone walls.	Low - Low use local road, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible – Views of both the existing quarry and application site are largely screened from this location by topography, vegetation and intervening developments There are glimpsed views of some of the higher elements of the existing quarry through gaps in the hedgerow vegetation.	Quality	Neutral
				Extent	Local	
				Probability	Likely	
				Frequency	Daily	
				Duration	Long-Term	
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to a Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible	
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Photomontage	Not required	

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VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation	
VP10	Local Road north west of site at Tomnahulla	The view is of agricultural field with stone walls and some vegetation. The application site is largely screened by topography and vegetation.	Low - Low use local road, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible – Views of both the existing quarry and application site are largely screened from this location by topography, vegetation and intervening developments. There are some glimpsed views of the higher elements of the existing development, notably the sheds, however these do not appear incongruous in this landscape. The proposed development would not be visible from here due to the intervening vegetation and development.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local	
				Probability	Likely	
				Frequency	Daily	
				Duration	Long-Term	
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to an Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible	
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Photomontage	Not required	



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation	
VP11	Local Road north of site at Glennafosha	Distant view over agricultural fields with N83 visible on the left hand side of the image. Housing is visible throughout the image.	Low - Low use local road, not within an area of high visual amenity	Negligible – Views of both the existing quarry and application site are largely screened from this location by topography, vegetation and intervening developments. This view is at a higher elevation (50m AOD), however due to the distance from the site, the site appears diminutive within the context of the panorama, with existing detached residential dwellings appearing to exert a greater influence on this viewpoint.	Quality Extent Probability Frequency Duration Reversibility Photomontage	Negative Local Likely Daily Long-Term Reversible Not required
Significance	The Low sensitivity judgement coupled with a Negligible magnitude, corresponds to an Imperceptible significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), the significance is considered to be not significant.					
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.					



Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

- 12.86 The main mitigation by avoidance measure employed in this instance is the siting of the proposed development adjoining an existing quarry and in a landscape with a low sensitivity.
- 12.87 It is also proposed to introduce screening berms along the perimeter of the proposed extraction area. Berms are proposed of up to 4 m in height with slope angles not greater than 1:1.5 and will be re-vegetated as quickly as possible to avoid soil erosion by air and water.
- 12.88 The following native trees are also proposed along the northern screening berm:
- Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*
 - Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
 - Hazel *Corylus avellana*
 - Birch *Betula pubescens*
- 12.89 All walls, trees, shrubs, and ground vegetation will be removed in accordance with good practice. To avoid destruction of nests, vegetation removal will be planned to occur outside the bird breeding season (March to August).
- 12.90 Where feasible, any reusable materials such as stone from walls will be retained on-site for use in landscape features or for constructing boundary walls. In cases where reuse on-site is not possible, these materials will be removed off-site to an authorised waste location.
- 12.91 Vegetation that cannot be retained on site will be processed in an environmentally sensitive manner. Wood and plant material will be either:
- Chipped and repurposed as mulch for use in landscaping around the site, or
 - Removed off-site and sent to an appropriate recycling or composting facility.

Cumulative Effects

- 12.92 In the assessment of cumulative effects, any other existing, permitted or proposed developments in the surrounding area have been considered where they have the potential to generate cumulative effects with the proposed development. Chapter 17 sets out the methodology for identifying those developments which have the potential to cause cumulative effects. It excluded developments that were already constructed as these are already assessed as part of the baseline. Also excluded were small scale developments that would not have the potential to cause cumulative effects.
- 12.93 No developments were identified that would have the potential for cumulative visual effects.

Decommissioning Effects

- 12.94 Decommissioning effects would be associated with the proposed restoration of the proposed development. A restoration plan has been agreed with Galway County Council and seeks to complement the existing agricultural land uses adjacent to the worked out areas of the quarry. Restoration proposals comprise the redistribution of the remaining overburden from the stockpiles in selected locations on the quarry floor and sides and allowing it to vegetate naturally. Water would fill the existing quarry void, providing a new water feature which would add to the biodiversity of the area.

- 12.95 The proposals also include measures for the enhancement of the biological diversity of the site, which includes the retention of boundary vegetation and the earth berms that surround the site which have already been re-vegetated.
- 12.96 The decommissioning stage would also involve the removal of all plant and equipment from the site, including crushers, screen decks, tracked excavators, front end loaders and dump trucks.
- 12.97 Restoration will result in an improvement from the current quarried condition in landscape terms the site would experience a Minor (beneficial) impact from restoration.

Residual Effects

- 12.98 The proposal to extend the existing quarry would result in long-term changes to the landscape with the alteration of the landform. This effect on landscape character will be a very localised one within approximately 1 km to the north of the site (and predominately within 200m to the north). The magnitude of effect reduces with increasing distance as the development becomes a proportionally smaller and less noticeable feature in the landscape setting. The significance of landscape impact is deemed to be **slight/imperceptible** which is not considered to be significant in terms of landscape character. The restoration proposals offer opportunities for biodiversity net gain, with a greater variety of habitats present on the site after restoration that would have been prior to the commencement of development. The restoration also offers the opportunity to soften the development and further minimise any views.
- 12.99 The visual effect was assessed at 11 viewpoints, the majority of which occur within 2km of the site. The existing quarry is visible from a small number of vantage points to the south, west and north of the site, however the application site is only visible from the north. In this location, the magnitude of change will be typically "low", as the proposal would not intrude into the view significantly more than the existing quarry and the overall visual amenity would not be altered.
- 12.100 It is also anticipated that the proposed planting would mature over time and would ensure that any views would be further minimised.

References

- Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute, August 2024.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (hereafter referred to as the EPA Guidelines) (EPA 2022).
- The Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Assessing landscape value outside national designations (May 2021).
- Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals (2019) (currently under review).
- Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 05/2017 (Revised 2018) on Townscape Character Assessment (hereafter referred to as the TCA) (Landscape Institute 2018).
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GEIA) (DHPLG 2018).
- Environmental impact assessment of projects - Guidance on the preparation of the environmental impact assessment report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) (2017), European Commission.
- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA) 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013).