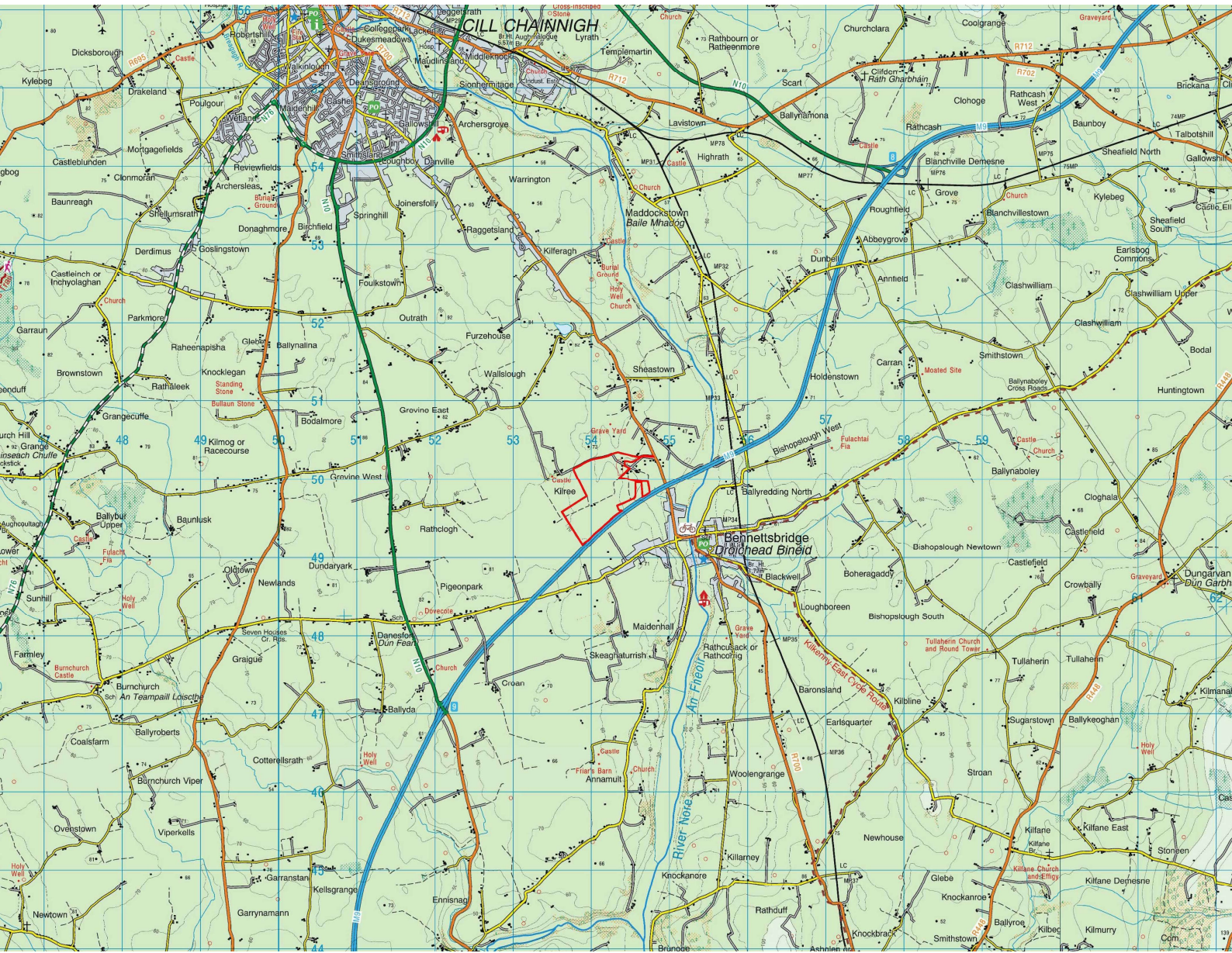


CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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JULY 2025

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bennettsbridge Limestone Quarries Unlimited Company (the applicant) is proposing a lateral extension to an existing limestone quarry at Kilree, Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny.
- 1.2 This EIAR (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) is provided in accordance with the EU EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by EIA Directive 2014/52/EU and the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, in order to inform the consideration of the Application and provide the planning authority with the environmental Information that must be taken into account when determining the Application. All the land required for the Proposed Development (included within the Application site boundary) is referred to in this EIAR as 'the Site'. The Proposed Development is entirely within the administrative boundary of Kilkenny County Council (KCC) and the EIAR is being provided to KCC as part of a planning application seeking full planning permission.
- 1.3 This EIAR has been prepared by Quarry Consulting, with the support of other consultancy advisors. A list of the main contributors to this EIAR is provided in Table 1.2 below.
- 1.4 Key areas of information presented within this EIAR concern the nature and extent of the Proposed Development, the character of the receiving environment and likely interactions between the two that could result in significant environmental impacts. Information presented on the receiving environment identifies the intrinsic value and importance of potential impact receptors.

The Applicant

- 1.5 Bennettsbridge Limestone is a family-owned company, based in Co. Kilkenny, Ireland, and is a prominent supplier of limestone products for the agriculture and construction industries. Known for its high calcium limestone, the company's limestone reserve boasts a 98% Pure Calcium Carbonate content, ensuring effectiveness in neutralising soil acidity.
- 1.6 The company distributes its products across Ireland, especially to the southeast regions including Kilkenny, Carlow, Waterford, and Wexford. Bennettsbridge Limestone focuses on environmentally friendly practices and aims to contribute positively to the local community and the environment. Bennettsbridge Limestone offer a range of products predominately aggregates and also products such as cubicle lime, high-calcium agricultural lime, animal feed lime, crushed stone for construction and roadways, and more specialised products like rock armour for riverbank protection.

The Application Site

- 1.7 The application site, which includes an existing permitted quarry that has been in operation since the 1980's, is located in the townland of Kilree, Sheastown, Bennettsbridge, Co Kilkenny, situated approximately 0.8 km northwest of the village of Bennettsbridge and approximately 7km south of Kilkenny City centre. The site is approximately 32km southwest of Carlow Town 38km north of Waterford and 44km west of Enniscorthy.
- 1.8 The existing permitted limestone quarry comprises a c. 36.5 Ha quarry operated by Bennettsbridge Limestone. Bennettsbridge Limestone owns the site where the proposed development will take place.
- 1.9 Access to the site is from a minor road (L26322) that branches from the R700 regional road that links Bennettsbridge Village with Kilkenny City. To the east of the existing quarry there is an office building, weighbridges and wheelwash located near the entrance to the quarry. The M9 motorway forms the southernmost boundary. The wider local landscape is undulating, with well-drained agricultural areas comprising a network of improved agricultural fields and associated hedgerows.

- 1.10 Existing manufacturing plants at the quarry include processing infrastructure (crushing, screening & lime plant), a precast manufacturing facility, and associated ancillary works for the manufacturing of concrete products, batching of lime products, general storage of products and plant, and an asphalt plant operated by Breedon Group.
- 1.11 An asphalt plant is also located within the wider quarry site and is operated independently by the Breedon Group under planning permission P18/150, which authorises its operation until 31st December 2028. This plant does not form part of the current application but is referenced where relevant in this EIAR for cumulative assessment purposes.
- 1.12 The proposed quarry extension lands currently comprise some agricultural land consisting of rectangular fields of gently sloping pastureland, enclosed by hedgerows. There is an approx. 6.8 ha area of commercial forestry in the south of the application area.
- 1.13 The site is situated between the 59m and 72m contour lines with the highest point corresponding with the west part of the site, which slopes downwards towards the east.
- 1.14 Beyond the site, the landscape is rural in character, consisting primarily of agricultural land interspersed with some areas of forestry. The main land use in the study area is agricultural, with dairy farming being the predominant sector practiced. Products from the quarry are used by the agricultural sector. Livestock winter accommodation associated with the adjoining landholding is located to the west of the greenfield area. There are two other operational quarries located to the northeast of the subject quarry.
- 1.15 The River Nore (EPA code: IE_SE_15N012090) flows in a north-south direction approx. 1.1km to the east of the application site. The Dunbell_Little stream (EPA code: IE_SE_15N012090) is located 620m east of the application area.
- 1.16 Development in the area is characterised by a mix of one-off rural houses, farmsteads and ribbon development along the local and regional road network. The nearest dwelling to the proposed extension area is a detached house, approximately 329m to the northwest, beyond which are several further dwellings located along the local road network to the north and south of the site.

The Proposed Development

Operational Phase (Extraction and Processing)

- 1.17 The proposed development will take place within an overall application area of approximately 61 hectares and will consist of the following:
- The continued extraction of rock — including periodic blasting to fragment the rock prior to excavation — from the existing permitted quarry area (Plan File Ref. No. 18/858) beyond the current permission expiry date;
 - The continued use of existing quarry infrastructure (including crushing, screening and lime processing plant), existing pre-cast manufacturing facility (including associated ancillary works for manufacturing of concrete products), batching of lime products, workshop, canteen, toilet facilities, weighbridges, wheelwash, fuel storage area and switch room, settlement lagoons, haul roads, ESB substation, plant and product storage areas and all other ancillary facilities as permitted under Plan File Ref. No. 18/858;
 - The continued use of site offices authorised under Plan File Ref. No. 20/891;
 - A lateral extension of the existing limestone quarry, within an area of approx. 24.5 Ha., comprising:
 - approximately 18.2 hectares of extraction, including blasting, over 2 no. c 19 metre high benches to a final floor level ranging from 25 to 30m OD; and

- overburden storage areas and landscaped screening berms (6.3 Ha).
 - To access the extension lands rock will be extracted - including by controlled blasting - from under:
 - approx. 1.4 hectare of land that is currently under landscaping measures authorised under Plan File Ref. No. 18/858;
 - approx. 2.1 hectare of land that is currently in use as an access ramp authorised under Plan File Ref. No. 18/858.
 - The removal of topsoil and overburden, construction of landscaped screening berms, and provision of an overburden storage area;
 - Demolition of an existing farmyard and associated buildings and structures, permitted under Plan File Ref. No. 15/595, and removal of approximately 6.81 hectares of commercial forestry within the proposed extension area to allow for the proposed quarry development;
 - All associated ancillary site facilities/works, including surface water management, internal haul roads, phased restoration, and landscaping.
- 1.18 The applicant is seeking a 25-year permission for extraction and associated activities, with an additional 2 years for final site restoration.
- 1.19 Aggregate extracted by blasting from the application area will be processed using both static and mobile crushing and screening plant within the existing quarry void – refer to Figure 3.1. Processed rock will be stored in the existing permitted quarry area pending use in the ancillary manufacturing plants (concrete and lime) on site or sale off site. An asphalt plant, operated by Lagan Macadam, has its own planning permission—granted in 2018 (Plan Ref File No. 18150)—and does not operate under the quarry’s planning permission
- 1.20 Due to the nature of the proposed development, the construction stage—consisting primarily of the stripping of topsoil and overburden, removal of existing woodland within the extraction area, and demolition of the farmyard structures—will proceed concurrently with initial operational activities, including the construction of screening berms. This integrated approach is designed to optimise site preparation and resource use while minimising environmental disturbance.

Restoration (Reinstatement to Nature Conservation Habitat Areas)

- 1.21 Upon the cessation of extraction operations, it is proposed to return the worked lands to natural habitat after-uses – refer to EIAR Chapter 3, Figure 3.2 and Chapter 6: Biodiversity.
- 1.22 Where feasible, restoration of exhausted and redundant areas will be carried out at the earliest opportunity. However, it is envisaged that the majority of the restoration proposals will be carried out after extraction operations at the site have ceased.

Need for an EIAR

- 1.23 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process undertaken by the competent authority—in this case, the Planning Authority Kilkenny County Council—to assess the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. This assessment is based on an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), which is prepared by or on behalf of the applicant. The EIAR brings together the findings of a systematic analysis of the project’s potential environmental impacts and is intended to inform the decision-making process by enabling the Planning Authority, statutory consultees, and other stakeholders to fully understand the environmental implications of the proposed development.

1.24 The European Union's 1985 EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) was amended by Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC, and the Directive and its amendments were codified in 2011 by Directive 2011/92/EU.

1.25 The current Directive 2014/52/EU amends the 2011 codified Directive but does not replace it. This amending Directive was transposed into national planning consent procedures in September 2018 through the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018).

1.26 The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (currently the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) published the following in the draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála in relation to carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment, (August 2018):

'The objective of Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, through the establishment of minimum requirements for environmental impact assessment (EIA), prior to development consent being given, of public and private developments that are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'

1.27 The amended EIA Directive prescribes a range of environmental factors which are used to organise descriptions of the environment and these factors must be addressed in the EIAR. Article 3(1) of the amended Directive states that:

The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on the following factors:

a) population and human health;

b) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC;

c) land, soil, water, air and climate;

d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape;

e) the interaction between the factors referred to in points (a) to (d).

EIA is mandatory for certain types of projects and for other projects that meet or exceed thresholds as set out in Annexes I and II of the Directive (and Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended).

1.28 For certain projects, and for others meeting or exceeding the thresholds outlined in Annexes I and II of the Directive (and Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended), an EIA is obligatory.

1.29 Paragraph 19 of Part 1 of Schedule 5 states that the following form of development requires an EIA

"Quarries and open-cast mining where the surface of the site exceeds 25 hectares.

1.30 Paragraph 22 relates to changes or extensions. It states:

"Any change or extension of projects listed in this Annex where such a change or extension in itself meets the thresholds, if any set out in this Annex."

1.31 Paragraph 2 of Part 2 of Schedule 5 refers to extractive industry and part (b) of that section states that the following requires an EIA:

“Extraction of stone, gravel, sand or clay, where the area of extraction would be greater than 5 hectares.”

1.32 In addition, paragraph 13(a) of Part 1 requires EIA in respect of:

“Any change or extension of development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed (not being a change or extension refer to in Part 1) which would:-

- i. result in the development being of a class listed in Part 1 or paragraphs 1 to 12 of Part 2 of this Schedule and
- ii. result in an increase in size greater than –

25 per cent, or

an amount equal to 50 per cent of the appropriate threshold,

whichever is the greater.

1.33 The proposed development relates to the lateral extension of the existing permitted quarry into an additional area of approximately 24.5 hectares, within an overall application site area of approximately 61 hectares. The overall site includes existing extraction areas, processing infrastructure, storage areas, and the proposed extension lands.

1.34 Under Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), the extraction of minerals by surface means is a class of development for which an Environmental Impact Assessment is mandatory where the area of extraction exceeds 25 hectares. The total area of the existing and proposed quarry development exceeds this threshold. Accordingly, an EIAR is required.

1.35 In addition, under Schedule 5, Part 2, an EIA is required for quarries where the extraction area exceeds 5 hectares. The extraction area alone, being in excess of 5 hectares, triggers the need for an EIAR under Part 2.

EIAR Document and Chapter Structure

1.36 The findings of the EIA are set out in this EIAR and comprise the following chapters as presented in Table 1.1. The methodology used within the EIAR is outlined in Chapter 2.0 (Scoping and Methodology). The responsible parties examining the respective topic areas have also been provided in Table 1.2. The EIAR was completed by a project team led by Quarry Consulting, who also prepared a number of the chapters.

1.37 A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) accompanies the EIAR and provides a summary of the key findings of the EIA in non-technical language.

Table 1-1: EIAR Chapter Structure

EIAR Chapter	Chapter Title	Responsibility
1.0	Introduction	Quarry Consulting
2.0	Scope & Methodology	Quarry Consulting
3.0	Project Description	Quarry Consulting
4.0	Alternatives	Quarry Consulting
5.0	Population & Human Health	Quarry Consulting
6.0	Biodiversity	Green and Blue Ecology
7.0	Land, Soils & Geology	Hydro-G
8.0	Water	Hydro-G
9.0	Climate	Quarry Consulting
10.0	Air Quality	AWN Consulting
11.0	Noise & Vibration	Sine Environmental
12.0	Visual & Landscape	Macroworks
13.0	Traffic	Kilgallen & Partners
14.0	Heritage	Dr. Charles Mount
15.0	Material Assets	Quarry Consulting
16.0	Interactions	Quarry Consulting
17.0	Mitigation & Monitoring	Quarry Consulting

EIA Project Team

- 1.38 The members of the team and their respective inputs are presented in Table 1.2. In accordance with EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, we confirm that lead specialists involved in the preparation of the EIAR are fully qualified and competent in their respective field. Each has extensive proven expertise in the relevant field concerned, thus ensuring that the information provided herein is complete and of high quality.

Table 1-2: EIA Project Team

Discipline	Specialist	Qualifications	Accreditations	Years of Experience	Professional
Introduction; Scope and Methodology; Project Description; Alternatives; Climate; Interactions.	Peter Kinghan (Quarry Consulting)	Geo-Surveying (Diploma) Mineral Surveying and Resource Management (BSc Hons) Environmental Engineering (Post Graduate Diploma) Geographic Information Systems (Certificate) Business Management (MSc) Environmental Sustainability (Certificate)	Member of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors UK	24	
Introduction; Scope and Methodology; Project Description; Alternatives; Climate.	Rory Brickenden (Quarry Consulting)	Geoscience (BA Hons) Water, Waste & Environmental Engineering (MEngSc)		2	
Population and Human Health; Material Assets; Planning Statement	Irene Curran (Quarry Consulting)	Environmental Science (BSc Hons) Town and Country Planning (MSc Dist) Field Ecology (Diploma)	Chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute	20	

Discipline	Specialist	Qualifications	Accreditations	Years of Experience	Professional
Biodiversity	Steve Judge (Blue and Green Ecology)	Countryside Management / Environmental Management and Monitoring (BSc Hons)	Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management	20+	
Land, Soils and Geology; Hydrology and Hydrogeology	Dr. Pamela Bartley (Hydro-G)	Certificate in Civil Engineering in Letterkenny RTC Diploma in Water and Wastewater Engineering Bachelor of Engineering degree MSc. in Environmental Engineering Ph.D	Engineers Ireland and the International Association of Hydrogeologists (Irish Group)	20+	
Air Quality	Dr. Jovanna Arndt (AWN Consulting)	BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science PhD in Atmospheric Chemistry	Member of the Institute of Air Quality Management.	8+	
Noise and Vibration	Sam Williams (Sine Environmental Ltd.)	BEng (Hons), Building Services Engineering	Member of the UK Institute of Acoustics (IoA)	25+	
Traffic	Paul Bergin (Kilgallen and Partners)	(Undergraduate)	Chartered Member of Engineers Ireland	25+	

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Discipline	Specialist	Qualifications	Accreditations	Years of Experience	Professional
		Bachelor of Civil Engineering awarded by University College Dublin (1990) <i>(Postgraduate)</i> Professional Certificate in Road Safety Audits [UCD] Diploma in Highway & Geotechnical Engineering [TCD] Diploma in Public Administration for Engineers [IPA]			
Heritage	Charles Mount (Dr. Charles Mount Archaeology and Cultural Heritage)	M.A. Archaeology Ph.D. Archaeology Dip. EIA & SEA Management	MIAI Member of the Discovery Programme	25+	

Description of EIAR Study Team's Background and Experience

Quarry Consulting

- 1.39 Quarry Consulting is an environmental consultancy that includes in their team a Chartered Mineral Surveyor, Chartered Geomatics Surveyor, Geo-Scientist, Chartered Town Planner & Ecologist. The team have extensive experience in project managing planning applications and coordinating Environmental Impact Assessments for a range of energy, extractive and waste related developments.

Green and Blue Ecology

- 1.40 Steve Judge is a professional ecologist with 20 years experience in environmental and ecological consultancy working for a large number of clients from both the private and public sectors throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Projects include: industrial and housing development, mining and minerals, waste management, flood defence, energy and renewables.
- 1.41 Highly experienced in undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Appropriate Assessments (Stage 1 and Stage 2), habitat and species surveys, and in the design and implementation of ecological mitigation strategies for a wide range of habitats and species.
- 1.42 Specialist in Ecology of freshwater systems that includes experience of eco-hydrology, wetland creation, biological water quality assessments, water level management plans and condition assessments of riparian features and structures.

Hydro-G: Specialists in Hydrogeological and Environmental Services

- 1.43 Hydro-G is a leading consultancy specialising in hydrogeology, groundwater management, and environmental engineering. With a focus on providing sustainable water management solutions, Hydro-G has extensive experience in groundwater assessments, hydrogeological risk evaluations, and designing effective water management systems for extractive and construction sector projects.
- 1.44 Dr. Pamela Bartley, the principal consultant at Hydro-G, is a nationally recognised karst groundwater specialist with almost 30 years' practical experience in quarry hydrology, groundwater supply, and Section 4 Discharge Licensing. She is a member of Engineers Ireland and the International Association of Hydrogeologists (Irish Group), and holds postgraduate qualifications including an MSc and PhD in Environmental Engineering from Trinity College Dublin.
- 1.45 Dr. Bartley is considered an expert service provider to Uisce Éireann and has completed successful EIARs and Section 4 licence applications for regionally important quarries in SAC and NHA settings. Her relevant project experience includes:
- Bennettsbridge Limestone, Co. Kilkenny: successful EIA and revised Section 4 licence (ENV/W/78) for discharge to the River Nore;
 - McGrath Limestone Works Ltd, Cong, Co. Galway: discharge upstream of Lough Corrib SAC/SPA (W391/05_R1);
 - Churchill Stone Ltd, Co. Donegal: discharge to sensitive headwater area (Lwat65);
 - Harrington Concrete and Quarries, Ardgaheen, Co. Galway: nature-based system within conduit karst aquifer (W_502_22);
 - MC Group, Castleisland, Co. Kerry: discharge to surface water (W214).

AWN Consulting

- 1.46 AWN Consulting are a leading environmental consultancy based in Ireland, specialising in delivering innovative solutions to meet regulatory and environmental requirements. With decades of expertise, they provide comprehensive services across a wide range of sectors, including infrastructure, industrial facilities, renewable energy, residential developments, and data centres.
- 1.47 AWN assess the impact of emissions during construction and operational phases, including dust, particulates, and pollutants. Their studies ensure compliance with air quality standards and recommend mitigation measures to minimise environmental and health impacts.

Sine Environmental

- 1.48 Over the last 20 years, Sam has been responsible for the acoustic assessment of over 150 schemes. His experience is wide and covers a range of sectors. Notable highlights include advising the airports commission on the potential noise effects of adding an additional runway to either Gatwick or Heathrow airport; the calculation of city-wide road traffic noise emission maps of Birmingham and Coventry; and mitigating potential noise impacts of one of the largest oil and gas field in the world.
- 1.49 Through decades of involvement in major projects Sam has developed a deep understanding of the complexities of modelling noise and vibration impacts, and the requirements of a wide range of assessment methods. Sam is familiar with the planning process, experienced at preparing environmental statements, and has provided evidence to planning appeals, public inquiries, DCOs and to government commissions.

Kilgallen and Partners

- 1.50 Kilgallen and Partners has carried out Traffic and Transportation Assessments on a broad range of developments, analysing potential impacts upon road networks up to and including Motorway Interchanges.

Dr. Charles Mount

- 1.51 Dr. Charles Mount is an Archaeologist with more than 30 years' experience of archaeology, cultural heritage and project management. He has extensive experience of environmental impact assessment gained over the last 30 years in a wide range of industries in the private and semi-state sectors including energy, extractive, waste, water, residential, transport and agri-food. Dr. Mount is a member of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland and the Discovery Programme. He is a graduate of University College Dublin with an M.A, and Ph.D. in Archaeology and has completed the UCD Diploma course in EIA and SEA Management.

References

- Environmental Protection Agency. "Guidelines on the information to be contained within an EIAR", (EPA May 2022).

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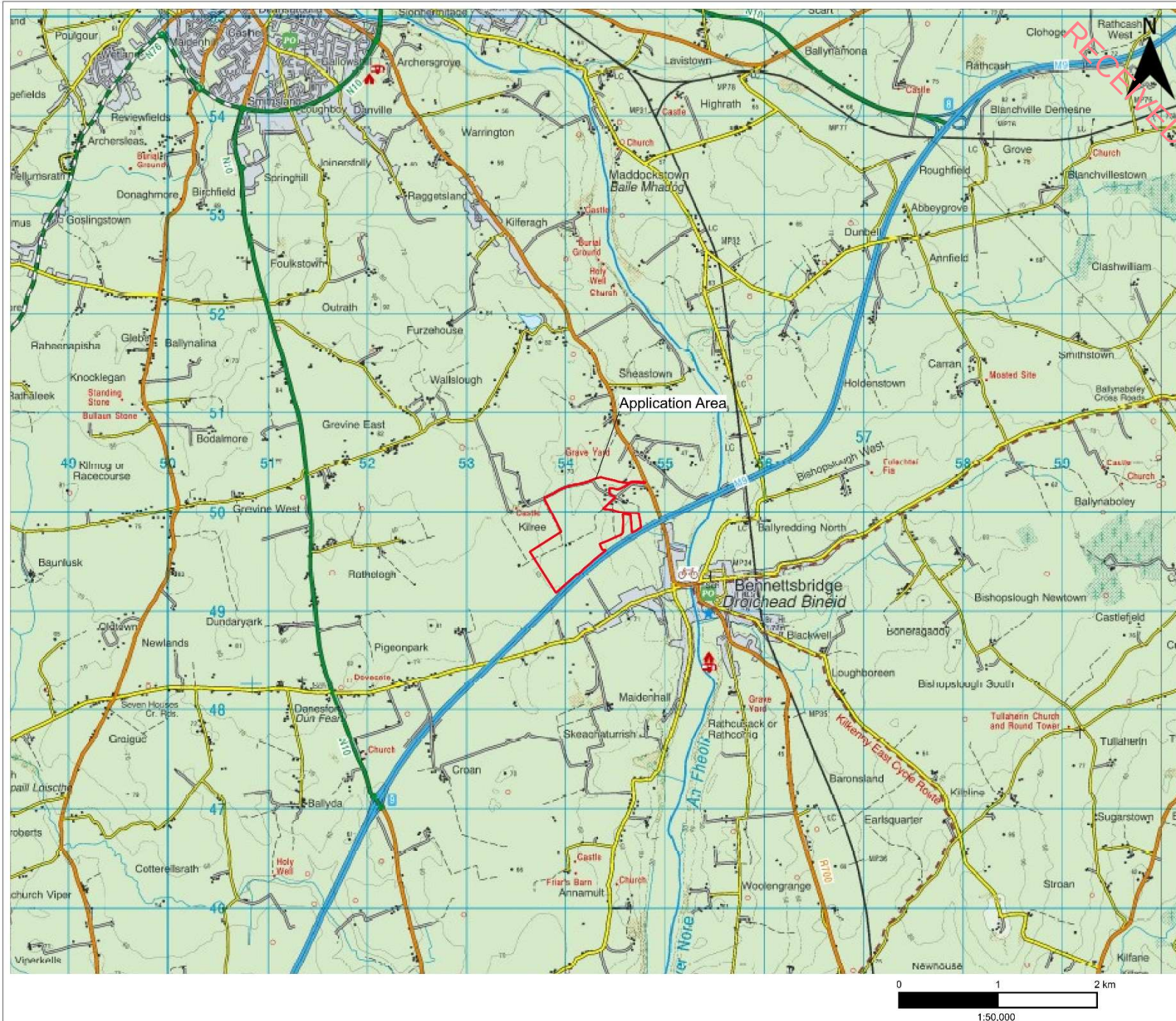
Figures

Figure 1.1: Site Location

Figure 1.2: Site Context

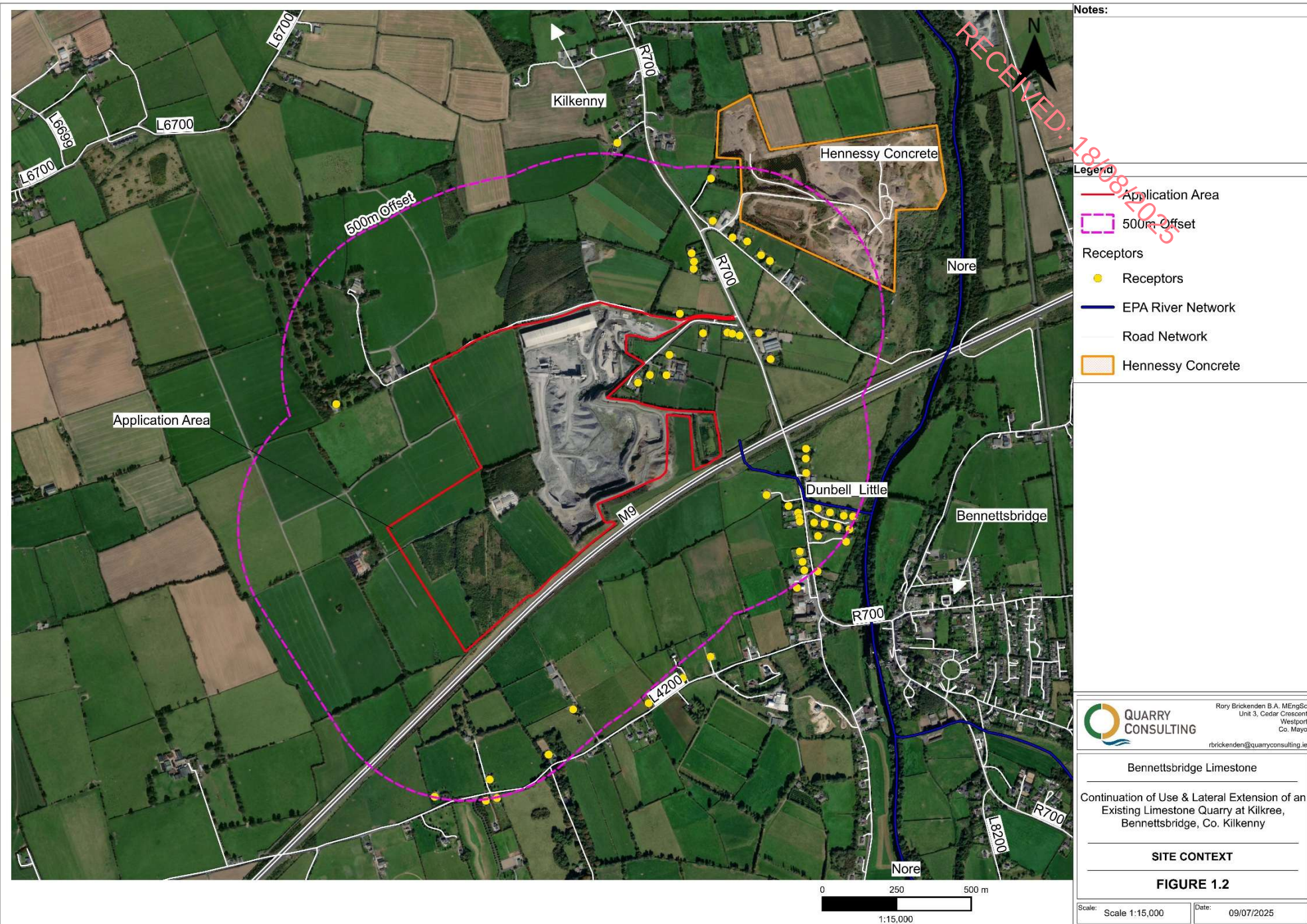
Figure 1.3: Existing Site Layout

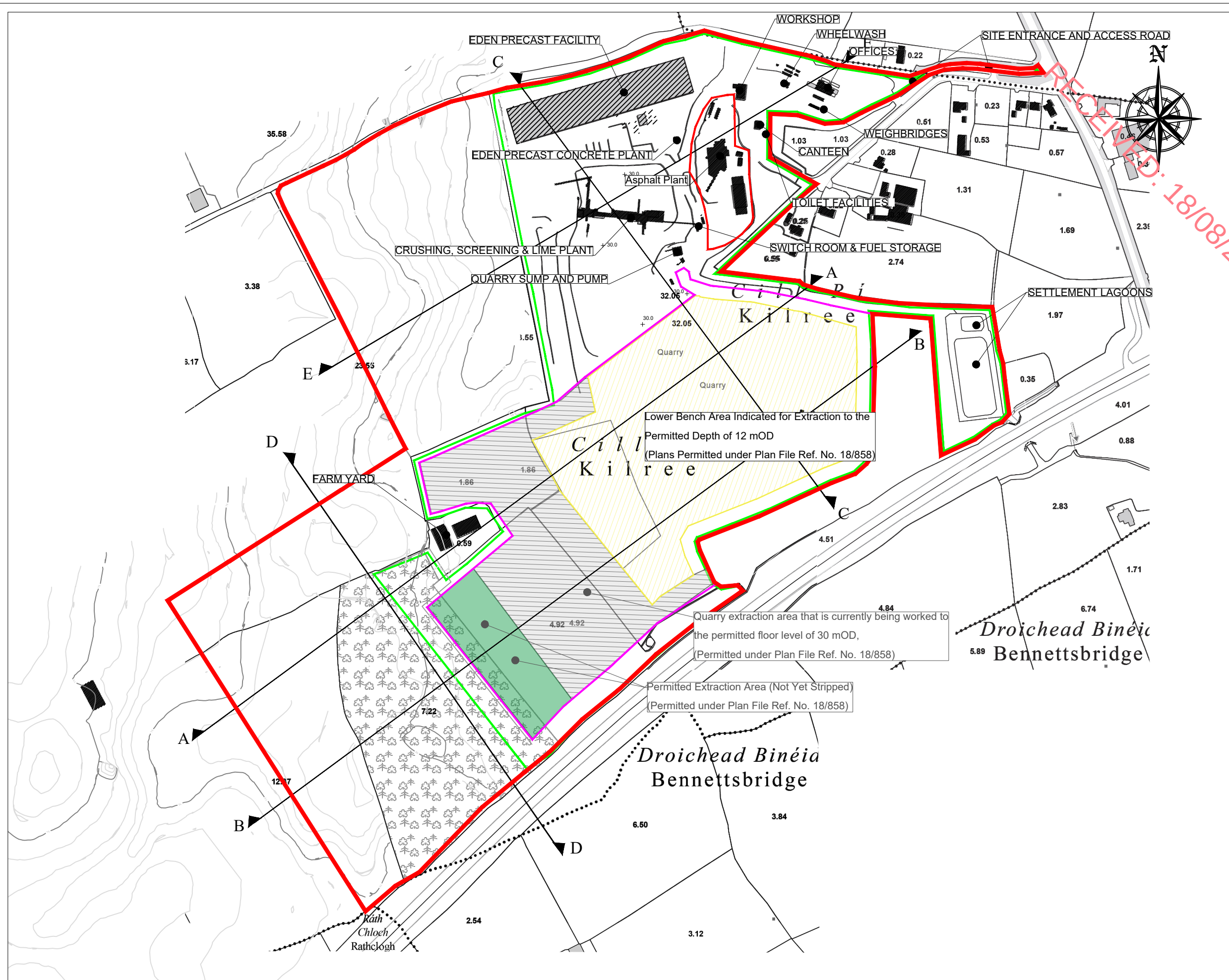
Figure 1.1 Site Location



Notes: MAP SHEETS: OS2414 / OS2614	
Legend Application Area Ordnance Survey Ireland Discovery Map	
QUARRY CONSULTING Rory Brickenden B.A. MEngSc Unit 3, Cedar Crescent Westport Co. Mayo rbrickenden@quarryconsulting.ie Bennettsbridge Limestone Continuation of Use & Lateral Extension of an Existing Limestone Quarry at Kilkree, Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny	
SITE LOCATION FIGURE 1	
Scale: Scale 1:50,000	Date: 09/07/2025

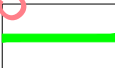
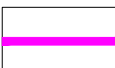
Figure 1.2 Site Context





- | OTES | |
|------|---|
| 1. | Topographical Survey Data from Survey completed in March 2024 by ASM Ireland; |
| 2. | All points are coordinated relative to Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM); |
| 3. | All elevations are relative to Malin Head. |

LEGEND

- | | |
|---|--|
|  | PLANNING APPLICATION AREA |
|  | PERMITTED AREA
(PLAN FILE REF. NO. 18858) |
|  | PERMITTED EXTRACTION AREA
(PLAN FILE REF. NO. 18858) |
|  | PERMITTED AREA INDICATED
FOR EXTRACTION TO 12 MOD
(PLAN FILE REF. NO. 18858) |
|  | CROSS SECTION LOCATIONS:
REFER TO FIGURE 3.3 |

 QUARRY CONSULTING	Peter Kinghan (MSCSI MRICS) Chartered Geomatics Surveyor Chartered Mineral Surveyor Unit 3, Cedar Crescent Westport Co. Mayo pkinghan@quarryconsulting.ie
BENNETTSBRIDGE LIMESTONE PROPOSED QUARRY DEVELOPMENT AT KILREE, BENNETTSBRIDGE CO. KILKENNY EXISTING SITE LAYOUT FIGURE 1.3	