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Introduction

Background

13.1 This report assesses the landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed extension to the sand & gravel pit at Kilmore, Brinny, Co. Cork, including the continuance of use of the existing ancillary / processing facilities. The application area is located approximately 4 km north-east of the town of Bandon and 4 km north-west of the village of Inishannon. The R589 – Regional Road passes within 500 m to the south-east of the site.

13.2 The planning application area, hereafter referred to as 'the application area' or 'the site', comprises the access road and processing facilities associated with the existing sand & gravel pit, as well as two existing agricultural fields, currently under pasture. It is proposed to extract sand and gravel from the two agricultural fields in the extension area and carry out phased restoration, back to agricultural land, over a 17 year period. Further details on the proposed development are provided in Chapter 2 of this EIAR. Refer to EIAR Figure 2-4 and planning drawing PL07 for the proposed Landscape & Restoration Plan (Incl. Tree Protection and Removal).

13.3 This EIAR chapter should be read in conjunction with the following figures, which have been prepared to inform it:

- **Figure 13-1**: Landscape Baseline and Viewpoint Locations
- **Figure 13-2**: Viewpoints A & B
- **Figure 13-3**: Viewpoints C & D
- **Figure 13-4**: Viewpoints E & F

Scope of Work / Assessment Methodology

13.4 The EPA guidelines in relation to the preparation of an EIAR (May 2022) suggest the following typical headings that may be included in respect of the prescribed environmental factor 'The Landscape':

- Landscape Appearance and Character;
- Landscape Context;
- Views & Prospects; and
- Historical Landscapes.

13.5 These headings are incorporated in the below assessment, as appropriate. However, in the absence of more detailed Irish guidance, the assessment contained within this chapter is based on the Third Edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment issued by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (hereinafter referred to as 'GLVIA3'). These guidelines are widely accepted as best practice for Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) in Ireland.

13.6 GLVIA3 emphasises that landscape and visual effects are related but independent issues; landscape effects are changes in the landscape, its character and quality; while visual effects relate to the appearance of these changes and the resulting effect on visual amenity.

13.7 The assessment of overall landscape and visual effects and their significance is defined in terms of the relationship between the sensitivity of the landscape/visual receptors and the magnitude of the change.

13.8 As GLVIA3 (paragraph 2.23) states, professional judgement is an important part of the LVIA process: whilst there may be some scope for objective measurement of landscape and visual changes, much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements. It is critical that these judgements are based upon a clear and transparent method so that the reasoning can be followed and examined by others.

13.9 GLVIA3 sets out a framework for making judgements about the level of effects that may result from change or development. It describes a step by step approach in which: judgements about the value and susceptibility of the receptor are combined into a judgement about sensitivity; judgements about the size/scale of the effect, its geographical extent and its duration and reversibility are combined into a judgement about the magnitude of the effect; and finally, the judgements about sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the effect are combined to judge the level of the effect. If the assessment forms part of an EIA, a threshold may then be identified to show which effects are considered to be significant and which are not.

13.10 GLVIA3 is not prescriptive about exactly how the various judgments required in this framework should be made. This is a matter for individual practitioners to decide and explain. In this document it has been assessed that Major or Major/Moderate levels of effect are significant.

13.11 The full LVIA methodology is described in **Appendix 13-A**. Please note that much of the terminology used in assessing the landscape and visual effects is in accordance with the above-mentioned EPA Guidelines. However, the terminology used to describe the level of effects (= “significance of effects” in the EPA Guidelines) differs slightly from said EPA Guidelines, based on examples provided in GLVIA3.

Technical Standards

13.12 Photography and visual representations are based on the principles set out in the Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals. There is no Irish standard/guidance, and in our experience, it is typically considered sufficient to provide two annotated viewpoint photographs (Type 1 photography in Technical Guidance Note 06/19) on one A3-sized sheet, using a range of horizontal angles of view (i.e. 75˚-105˚) to illustrate the full extent of the development within each photograph presented, as well as the context within which the site is located.

13.13 The Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – *Assessing landscape value outside national designations* was taken account of in the preparation of the assessment methodology, as provided in **Appendix 13-A** at the end of this chapter.

13.14 The Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 – Notes and Clarifications on aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) was also taken into account in the preparation of the assessment methodology provided.

Consultations/Consultees

13.15 A number of planning applications have been submitted to Cork County Council and determined at the location over the past 5 years. Feedback received from Cork County Council, as part of these previous applications was considered in the preparation of this

EIAR chapter and in the preparation of the Landscape and Restoration Plan (Incl. Tree Protection and Removal) – EIAR Figure 2-4, and planning drawing PL07.

13.16 Following a review of published development plans and the site survey, it was considered that there was no requirement for a separate formal consultation to be carried out regarding the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development.

Contributors/Author(s)

13.17 The LVIA including site work and completion of drawings was carried out by Anne Merkle, a Principal Landscape Architect with SLR Consulting Ireland. Anne graduated from the Nürtingen-Geislingen University (Germany) in Landscape Architecture (Dipl.-Ing. (FH)), in 2002. She has 20+ years' experience working for landscape consultancies in Ireland, specialising in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments for a wide range of projects, including quarries, waste recovery facilities, wind farms, powerlines and mixed developments. In 2017, Anne completed an MSc in Biodiversity and Land Use Planning at NUI Galway. She is a full member of the Irish Landscape Institute (MILI) since 2005.

13.18 Anne further holds a Technician's Certificate in Arboriculture and is a Technician Member of the Arboricultural Association (TechArborA).

Sources of Information

13.19 The assessment is based upon a desk top assessment of relevant plans, guidance and landscape character assessments, as well as a thorough site assessment carried out in September 2020. The desktop study and field work were informed by:

- Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- Draft Cork County Landscape Strategy (2007);
- digital and paper (Ordnance Survey Ireland) mapping at different scales; and
- information available on the internet (such as satellite images and information on recreational facilities and nature conservation sites).

Study Area

13.20 A study area of approximately 3 km surrounding the application area was identified during the desktop study, based on the local topography, i.e. undulating screening topography surrounding the site, as well as previous experience with mineral extraction sites. As this is a low-rise development visibility from a wider area is typically unlikely, especially if intervening vegetation, such as hedgerows, treelines and woodlands, is present in the local landscape. The field survey confirmed that this is the case for the proposed development and that the visual envelope, i.e. the area from where the application area is actually visible, is much smaller than the study area. Nevertheless, the 3 km study area is maintained for the purposes of providing landscape context.

Field Survey

13.21 A detailed site survey was carried out on 22nd September 2020 in overcast conditions, but with good visibility. Photographs were taken during the site survey, using a Nikon D610 digital SLR full frame camera, with a fixed 50mm lens.

13.22 In accordance with GLVIA3, the field survey and viewpoint photography concentrated on publicly accessible areas, such as the road and public footpath networks, residential and outdoor recreational areas.

Limitations/Difficulties Encountered

13.23 No difficulties were encountered during the desktop study, field survey or in the preparation of this report.

Significant Risks

13.24 There are no known significant risks to human health or environmental effects, which may occur in relation to this landscape and visual impact assessment.

Regulatory Background

13.25 The following paragraphs set out the regulatory background with regard to LVIA in Ireland in general and the site-specific planning background relevant to the proposed development, in particular.

Legislation

13.26 In 2002, Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention[1], which promotes the protection, management and planning of landscapes. The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025[2] was published "*to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change*".

13.27 Article 1a of the European Landscape Convention defines landscape as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*". This definition has been included in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, along with the requirement that objectives relating to landscape shall be included in development plans.

13.28 There is no Irish legislation specifically governing the preparation of landscape and visual impact assessments.

Planning Policy

13.29 The Cork County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028[3] is the statutory plan detailing the development objectives/policies of the authority, covering the application area. Those policies/ objectives, with relevance to this assessment, are listed below. Refer to **Figure 13-1** – *Landscape Baseline and Viewpoint Locations* for the location and extent of the relevant designations within the study area.

Mineral Extraction

13.30 Section 8.17 of the current Cork CDP, 'Mineral Extraction', states that the Council "*aims to protect and safeguard the operations of working quarries and proven aggregate resources from incompatible developments to ensure the continued viability of the extractive industry, whilst also ensuring that environmental, rural, scenic and residential amenities are protected*."

13.31 CDP **Objective EC 8-16**: 'Safeguarding Mineral resources' states the following:

> *"a) Protect and safeguard the county's natural mineral resources from inappropriate development, by seeking to prevent incompatible land uses that could be located elsewhere, from being located in the vicinity of the resource, since the extraction of minerals and aggregates is resource based. …"*

[1] European Landscape Convention: https://rm.coe.int/16807b6bc7

[2] National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025: https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-landscape-strategy-for-ireland-2015-2025-9ce09c1d-594f-48df-ae6d-f5171f39d6d4.pdf

[3] Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028: https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/cork-county-development-plan-2022-2028

Green Infrastructure and Development

13.32 CDP **Objective GI 14-3**: 'Green Infrastructure and Development' states the following:

"*a) Require new development and redevelopment proposals, where considered appropriate, to contribute to the protection, management and enhancement of the existing green and blue infrastructure of the local area in terms of the design, layout and landscaping of development proposals.*

b) Require all development to submit a green infrastructure statement outlining how the proposal contributes to green and blue infrastructure both within its environs as well as within the wider settlement or rural area. Larger developments (multiple residential developments including Part 8 applications, retail, industrial, mineral extraction, etc) will be expected to prepare a Landscape/ Green (and Blue) Infrastructure Plan including a Landscape Design Rationale. This Plan should identify environmental assets and include proposals which protect, manage and develop green infrastructure resources in a sustainable manner. …"

Landscape Character Assessment of County Cork

13.33 Section 14.8 of the current Cork CDP summarises the content of the Draft Landscape Strategy, which was prepared for County Cork in 2007. This strategy identifies 16 landscape character types (LCT) and includes "*an evaluation of each landscape character type in terms of its Landscape Value, Sensitivity and Importance*". Refer to the Landscape Baseline section below for more detail from the Draft Landscape Strategy relevant to the study area.

13.34 Those LCTs of particularly high value, sensitivity and importance were designated as High Value Landscapes (HVL), within which "*considerable care will be needed to successfully locate large scale developments without them becoming unduly obtrusive*". Please note that the application area is not located within one such HVL and this designation will therefore not be considered further, as part of this LVIA.

13.35 CDP **Objective GI 14-9**: 'Landscape' states the following:

"*a) Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment.*

b) Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land-use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.

c) Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.

d) Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.

e) Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments."

13.36 CDP **Objective GI 14-10**: 'Draft Landscape Strategy' states the following:

"*Ensure that the management of development throughout the County will have regard for the value of the landscape, its character, distinctiveness and sensitivity as recognised in the Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy and its recommendations, in order to minimize the visual and environmental impact of development, particularly in areas designated as High*

Value Landscapes where higher development standards (layout, design, landscaping, materials used) will be required."

Landscape Views and Prospects

13.37 Section 14.9 of the current Cork CDP, 'Landscape Views and Prospects' includes objectives with regard to Views and Prospects and Scenic Routes.

13.38 CDP **Objective GI 14-12**: 'General Views and Prospects' states the following:

"*Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly sea views, river or lake views, views of unspoilt mountains, upland or coastal landscapes, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty as recognized in the Draft Landscape Strategy*."

13.39 The Sall River flows along the southern boundary of the application area. However, this is a small river, which is inconspicuous within the local landscape. The River Bandon traverses the south-eastern section of the study area but is visually separated from the application area by intervening topography. There are therefore no important river views which would be affected by the proposed development. Further to that there are no sea or lake views or views of unspoilt mountains within the study area. The types of views as listed under Objective GI 14-12 will therefore not be considered further, as part of this LVIA.

13.40 CDP **Objective GI 14-13**: 'Scenic Routes' states the following:

"*Protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes and in particular stretches of scenic routes that have very special views and prospects identified in this Plan. The scenic routes identified in this Plan are shown on the scenic amenity maps in the CDP Map Browser and are listed in Volume 2 Heritage and Amenity Chapter 5 Scenic Routes of this Plan*"

13.41 CDP **Objective GI 14-14**: 'Development on Scenic Routes' states the following:

"*a) Require those seeking to carry out development in the environs of a scenic route and/or an area with important views and prospects, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse obstruction or degradation of the views towards and from vulnerable landscape features. In such areas, the appropriateness of the design, site layout, and landscaping of the proposed development must be demonstrated along with mitigation measures to prevent significant alterations to the appearance or character of the area.*

b) Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes …."

13.42 One Scenic Route, listed in Volume 2 / Chapter 5 of the current Cork CDP is located within the south-eastern Section of the study area. This is "*S64: N71 National Secondary Road between Bandon and Inishannon. Views of the Bandon River & woodland."* As described for the 'General Views and Prospects' above, the River Bandon is visually separated from the application area by intervening topography and views along the river will therefore not be affected by the proposed development. Scenic Routes and in particular S64 will therefore not be considered further, as part of this LVIA.

Receiving Environment

Landscape Baseline

Existing Relevant Landscape Character Assessments

13.43 A Draft Landscape Strategy was prepared in 2007 for County Cork. This strategy identifies 76 landscape character areas (LCA), which were "*amalgamated into a set of 16 landscape character types based on similarities evident within the various areas. These landscape character types provide a more general categorization of the County's landscape*" (refer to section 14.8 of the Cork CDP 2022-2028).

13.44 The application area and all of the study area are fully located within landscape character type (LCT) 6a: Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys. The nearest other LCT, is LCT 7a: Rolling Patchwork Farmland over 5 km to the south-east. Due to the distance to and visual separation from any other LCTs they are not considered further in this assessment.

13.45 The landscape description for LCT 6a, in the 2007 Draft Landscape Strategy, states the following:

"*This landscape type stretches west and east from the environs of Cork City but also includes a smaller area east of Rathcormac. The valleys in these areas are created by the rivers flowing east to west and are surrounded by low well spaced ridges. These shallow and flat valleys wind as they follow the course of the river, rising to the north and south with gentle slopes where the valley is wide but with steeper faced slopes where the valley narrows. Further upstream to the west the broad flatness narrows and winds between low hills.*

Landcover comprises highly fertile, regularly shaped fields typically of medium size and with mature broadleaf hedgerows. Agricultural use primarily involves intensive dairying as well as tillage, with farmsteads relatively well screened by the hedgerows"

13.46 LCT 6a was evaluated as being of high landscape value, i.e. "*Picturesque landscapes with scenic routes, natural and cultural heritage of county or national importance*." LCT 1 has further been evaluated as being of county landscape importance and as having high landscape sensitivity, i.e. "*High sensitivity landscapes are vulnerable landscapes with the ability to accommodate limited development pressure. In this rank landscape quality is at a high level, landscape elements are highly sensitive to certain types of change. If pressure for development exceeds the landscape's limitations the character of the landscape may change*."

Landscape of the Site and its Context

13.47 GLVIA3 recommends that a landscape character assessment should be carried out as part of the baseline study (paragraph 5.4). This should consider:

- The elements that make up the landscape (physical, land cover and the influence of human activity);
- Aesthetic and perceptual aspects; and
- The overall character of the area.

Landscape Elements

13.48 The application area is located 4 km north-east of Bandon, 4 km north-west of Inishannon and 450 m north-west of the R589 – Regional Road, refer to Figure 13-1. The application area (ca. 18.3 ha) comprises the access road, processing plant, concrete plant and ancillary facilities associated with the existing Brinny sand and gravel pit, as well as parts of two agricultural fields, currently under pasture. It is proposed to extend the extraction activities into these fields, which are located to the west and north-west of the existing pit.

13.49 The external boundaries of the existing sand and gravel pit are marked by a mix of scrub covered ditches, dense hedgerows with some mature trees and mature tree lines. The mature tree lines are located along the western and northern boundaries, i.e. the boundaries with the extension area. The Sall River marks the southern boundary of the existing pit. To the north of the river, two electricity transmission lines, mounted on wooden poles cross the site in a north-east/south-west direction. The area between the two transmission lines and between the lines and the river is covered by dense scrub / immature woodland.

13.50 The proposed extension area covers the eastern half of the field to the west of the existing sand and gravel pit and the southern half of the field to the north-west. The western and northern boundaries of the application area are therefore open, as running along the centre of the two fields. The outer boundaries of these two fields are however marked by mature hedgerows / treelines.

13.51 The existing processing / ancillary area lies at a level of ca. 24 m above Ordnance Survey (AOD). The ground falls slightly towards the Sall River, south of the site, to under 20 m AOD and rises towards the site entrance at ca. 33 m AOD.

13.52 Levels within the extension area to the west of the existing sand and gravel pit are gently sloping from 29 m AOD in the north-eastern corner to 26 m AOD approximately 100m from the southern boundary. As this point the ground begins to slope more steeply to a level of 20 m AOD along the boundary. The topography of the remainder of the field to the west of the extension area is similar.

13.53 Levels within the extension area to the north-west of the existing sand & gravel pit are, for the most part, gently sloping between 28 m AOD in the south-west and 32 m AOD to the north-east. The topography along the northern boundary of the extension area and of the remainder of the field to the north is steeply sloping over a distance of 100-170 m to levels of 55 m AOD in the north-western and 40 m AOD in the north-eastern corner. The highest point along the outline of the proposed extraction area is at approximately 32 m AOD.

13.54 To the west and east of the application area the topography continues almost level along the river valley (i.e. the Sall River valley), the base of which is approximately 1 km wide. To the north and south of this, the topography becomes undulating with several layers of low ridgelines parallel to the river valley, broken up by secondary valleys from a northern or southern direction. Highpoints in the northern half of the study area range from 133 m AOD to 179 m AOD. This is noticeably higher than the southern half of the study area where highpoints range from 85 m AOD to 90 m AOD.

13.55 The landscape surrounding the application area has the characteristics described for LCT 6a in the Cork Draft Landscape Strategy (see above), i.e. fertile lowland valleys, surrounded by low ridges.

13.56 The majority of fields within the agricultural landscape of the study area are under pasture, with some tillage present as well. Fields typically have straight boundaries, unless adjoined by a watercourse. Smaller fields often have a regular rectangular shape, while larger fields are more irregularly shaped, as few boundaries are at right angles to each other. Most

fields are bound by hedgerows. In a few locations hedgerows appear to have been replaced by post and wire fencing, creating visually larger fields.

13.57 The river valleys within the study area are well wooded, in particular where they have steep sides. Other than this, tree cover is restricted to boundary hedgerows and shelterbelts surrounding farmsteads throughout the area. There are some small areas of conifer plantations, typically on steeper slopes.

13.58 The R589 is the main road within the study area, traversing it in a north-east / south-west direction. Another regional road, the R590 branches off the R589 in a north-western direction, in the south-western section of the study area. A dense network of local roads follows the river valleys and crosses over the ridgelines to the north and south of the application area. There are no villages or larger settlements within the study area. However, ribbon development and one-off housing is abundant along all but the most elevated sections of the roads throughout.

13.59 Aside from the well-maintained fields and trimmed hedgerows, there are many man-made elements throughout the study area, such as the aforementioned electricity transmission lines, roads and farm and residential buildings, as well as associated walls and fencing. There is a large industrial development to the east of the application area (MSD Brinny) and an existing single wind turbine is visible on one of the ridgelines to the south-east of the site.

Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects

13.60 Field sizes throughout the study area range from small to large, with the majority being of a medium size. The two fields within which the extraction extension area is proposed are of a large size. This results in a mostly large scale and there are open views in a southern direction from within the site. However, partial enclosure is provided by the treelined boundaries and the steeply sloping topography at the northern end. The existing sand and gravel pit is similarly open with some enclosure by the vegetated site boundaries.

13.61 While the landscape within the study area is rural, there is no sense of wildness, as this is clearly a man-made, working landscape. The eastern section of the application area is strongly influenced by the presence of the existing sand and gravel pit, while the extension area is somewhat visually separated by the existing treelines and therefore has a more rural characteristic. Noise from the existing processing plant and machinery is audible across the site, including the extension area.

13.62 The existing sand and gravel pit is a complex mix of colours and textures, due to the sand and gravel extraction and processing activities, as well as areas of recolonising bare ground, areas restored to pasture, mature boundary hedgerows and scrub. The two fields within which the extension area is proposed are simpler in form and colour, with uniform pasture land use and mature boundary hedgerows.

Overall Character

13.63 The site assessment supports the inclusion of the Site and its immediate context within the Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys LCT (LCT6a).

Protected Nature Conservation Sites

13.64 The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website was reviewed for protected nature conservation sites in proximity to the application area, as these provide an indication of the natural heritage value placed on the local landscape.

13.65 One such site is located within the study area, as detailed below. The nearest other nature conservation site is located over 6km to the east.

- Bandon Valley Above Inishannon proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) – Site Code: 001740 – c. 1.85 km to the south-east of the application area

Visual Baseline

Existing Visibility

13.66 The visibility of the existing sand and gravel pit at Brinny and the proposed extension lands was initially assessed by a desktop study of OSI Discovery Maps (1:50,000) and aerial / satellite photography, followed by verification in the field.

13.67 It was found that views of the application area are greatly restricted by roadside and intervening vegetation, as well as the undulating topography in large parts of the study area. The application area is only visible in views from a small number of locations within 1.2 km to the north-west, 2 km to the south-west and 1.5 km to the south-east. In most cases, views are only intermittently available along roads, through gaps in the roadside hedgerows (e.g. at field gates) or where said vegetation is kept low.

13.68 Some residential properties with potential views of the proposed development were identified. However, the total number of properties with visibility is greatly reduced by mature vegetation surrounding most property boundaries, as well as intervening vegetation and topography.

13.69 Six viewpoints were selected to represent the range of views available surrounding the application area. The location of these viewpoints is illustrated on **Figure 13-1**. For each of the viewpoints, annotated photographs of the existing views are provided (refer to **Viewpoints A-F on Figures 13-2 to 13-4**). These photographs are made up from 4-6 individual photographic frames, which were merged together using Adobe Photoshop software. It should be noted that photography is a tool to assist in the visualisation process and cannot be expected to replicate the actual view that would be attained on the ground.

13.70 **Viewpoints A, E & F** illustrate how the existing sand and gravel pit and proposed extension area are typically screened throughout the study area by intervening vegetation and topography. They are located at different directions and distances from the application area and at different elevations.

13.71 **Viewpoint B** represents intermittent views from a short section (ca. 450 m) of the local road along the northern boundary of the field within which the northern section of the extension area is located. This field is openly visible in the foreground in views through gaps in the roadside hedgerow or where this has been recently cut. It slopes steeply away from the road, before flattening out towards the southern boundary. This is marked by a mature treeline which largely screens the western section of the extension area, as well as the existing sand and gravel pit and processing facilities. The proposed extraction works will be located in the lower / flatter half of the visible field. A gently undulating agricultural landscape is visible in the background, with the skyline formed by a broad indistinctive ridgeline. Approximately 3 residential properties are expected to experience similar views.

13.72 **Viewpoint C** represents intermittent views from an approximately 600 m long stretch of the same local road that Viewpoint B is located on, however, between 550 m-1,150 m to the north-west of the application area. In these views the northern section of the extension area is fully screened by topography, while the existing sand and gravel pit and processing area

are partially screened by topography and a treeline along their western boundary. The extension area to the west of the existing pit, a flat agricultural field on the valley floor, is partially visible in the midground. Parts of the industrial site at Brinny are visible beyond the existing sand and gravel pit. A gently undulating agricultural landscape is visible in the background, with the skyline formed by a broad indistinctive ridgeline. Approximately 8 residential properties are expected to experience similar views.

13.73 **Viewpoint D** represents views from an approximately 350 m long stretch of the R589 to the south-west of the application area and a 150 m long stretch of the local road branching of it to the west. It further represents a section of elevated ground up to 2 km to the south-west, within which a number of residential properties with likely similar views are located. In these views, the northern section of the extension area and the existing sand and gravel pit are largely screened by intervening vegetation. The western section of the extension area, a flat agricultural field on the valley floor, is partially visible in the midground. The generally flat agricultural landscape along the base of the valley is visible in the foreground of views, while a gently undulating agricultural landscape is visible in the background, with the skyline formed by broad indistinctive ridgelines. Approximately 10 residential properties are expected to experience similar views.

Outdoor Recreational Facilities within the Study Area

13.74 The study area was searched for existing outdoor recreational facilities, as these provide an indication of potential visual receptors within the area, in addition to local residents and road users. No formal walking routes or other outdoor recreational facilities were identified within the study area.

Sensitive Receptors

Landscape Receptors

13.75 The landscape receptors potentially affected by the proposed development and therefore considered as part of the assessment of landscape effects, are:

- Individual elements:
  - Gently sloping pasture fields;
  - Mature treelines; and
- Aesthetic and perceptual aspects:
  - Large-scale fields, with some enclosure from treelines / boundary hedgerows and some open views to the south; and
  - Generally simple form and colour of the extension area, with some diversity from adjacent existing sand and gravel pit.
- Overall Character:
  - Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys LCT (LCT 6a).

Visual Receptors

13.76 The visual receptors potentially affected by the proposed development and therefore considered as part of the assessment of visual effects, are:

- Residents:
  - Ca. three properties to the north of the northern section of the proposed extension area (represented by **Viewpoint B on Figure 13-2**);
  - Ca. eight properties between 550-1,150 m to the north-west of the application area (represented by **Viewpoint C on Figure 13-3**); and
  - Ca. ten properties between 650-2,000 m to the south-west of the application area (represented by **Viewpoint D on Figure 13-3**).
- Vehicle users:
  - Intermittent along the local road north of the northern section of the proposed extension area (represented by **Viewpoint B on Figure 13-2**);
  - Intermittent for ca. 600 m along the local road within 550-1,150 m to the north-west of the application area (represented by **Viewpoint C on Figure 13-3**); and
  - Intermittent for ca. 350 m along the R589 and 150 m of a local road roads, including a section of the R589, within 1 km to the south-west of the application area (represented by **Viewpoint D on Figure 13-3**).

Impact Assessment

13.77 This section sets out the effects that the proposed development would have on both landscape and visual receptors (as identified in the previous section), during the operational stage of the sand and gravel pit, including the phased extraction and restoration activities, as well as during the post-operational stage (i.e. permanent, on completion of all restoration works). It is based on the detailed project description and layout drawings contained in chapter 2 of this EIAR, refer to EIAR Figure 2-4 Landscape & Restoration Plan (Incl. Tree Protection & Removal) and EIAR Figure 2-5 Phasing Plan.

13.78 Please note that the proposed development does not comprise a distinct 'construction' stage in landscape and visual terms. This is due to the proposed continued use of the existing processing facilities and due to the initial setting up of the access into the extension area taking little time (ca. 2-3 weeks) and covering a small section of the application area only. These setting up works comprise the first element of the phased works which will spread out over the entire application area and will therefore be assessed as part of the operational phase.

Aspects of the Development which Have the Potential to Cause Landscape and Visual Effects

Operational Stage

13.79 The operational stage of the proposed development, for the purpose of this assessment, is considered to include the phased extraction / restoration and final restoration period, i.e. a total duration of 17 years.

13.80 The following elements of the proposed development, at the operational stage, are those which are most likely to result in landscape & visual effects:

- the phased extraction activities, within the extension area. This will result in the removal of approximately 9.8 ha of agricultural land and exposure of the underlying sand and gravel material, as well as changes to the landform. Within the field to the west of the existing sand and gravel pit, it is proposed to lower the ground by up to 3 m to a level of 26 m AOD in the northern half and down to 24 m AOD at the southern end. Within the field to the north of the existing sand and gravel pit, it is proposed to lower the ground by up to 8 m to a level of 25 m AOD (Note: the extraction works within the field to the north (Area 1) will be completed within 2 years of the commencement of the development, so that early restoration of the northern area, i.e. in Years 2 & 3, can be carried out, see below and refer to EIAR Figure 2-4 Restoration Plan and Figure 2-5 Phasing Plan);
- the loss of some mature trees along the existing treelines within the application area, as two approximately 10 m wide access points into the two sections of the extension areas are created (note: the vast majority of the existing treelines and other boundary vegetation will be retained; these will be protected by fencing), refer to EIAR Figure 2-4 and planning drawing PL07 Landscape & Restoration Plan (Incl. Tree Protection and Removal;
- the construction of temporary overburden storage / screening bunds along the outer perimeter of the extraction areas, as well as associated screen planting on the outside of these berms (i.e. ca. 7,200m^2 of native tree / shrub planting);

- the visibility of HGVs in the vicinity of the site entrance (i.e. max. 2 to 4 HGV trips/hour); and
- the phased restoration of the extension area and the processing area to an agricultural land-use (note: the northern section of the extension area and southern half of southern section will be fully restored by Year 17 following the commencement of the development), with associated hedge planting (i.e. ca. 145 m in total; to increase the habitat linkages and biodiversity within the site), refer to EIAR Figure 2-4.

13.81 It should be noted that with the exception of mobile lighting on the machinery used for the loading of material within the proposed sand and gravel extension area, no additional lighting over and above what is already in place within the existing development will be installed. All lighting will continue to only be in use for wintertime operations, when darkness has fallen, within the permitted site operating hours. The site will operate from 07.00 hours (loading only until 08.00 hours) until 18.00 hours Monday to Friday and until 14.00 hours on Saturdays. There will therefore be a period where such lighting will be required for up to 2 hours in the morning and up to 2h in the evening, during the height of winter. Night-time light pollution caused by the proposed development will therefore continue to be of brief duration during winter months, similar to what is already taking place on site, and is not considered significant.

Post-Operational Stage

13.82 The post-operational stage of the proposed development, for the purpose of this assessment, is considered to be the period when all extraction and restoration works are completed.

13.83 The following elements of the proposed development, at the post-operational stage, are those which are most likely to result in landscape & visual effects:

- The remaining pit slopes, which will have been lowered, as part of the restoration works, but which will remain visibly steeper than the adjoining ground and may take a number of years to become fully colonised with locally occurring grass and scrub species; and
- The proposed hedgerows within the site, which will take a number of years to mature and provide functional biodiversity links within the site.

Operational Stage Landscape Effects

Landscape Sensitivity

13.84 In accordance with GLVIA3, the sensitivity of landscape receptors is determined by combining their value with their susceptibility to the type of development proposed.

13.85 In determining the value of landscapes, GLVIA3 recommends that the starting point should be to consider landscape-related designations. While the wider ‘Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys LCT (LCT 6a)’ was assessed as having high landscape value, county landscape importance and high sensitivity in the Draft Landscape Strategy of Co. Cork, it is important to note that no part of the application area or its immediate context is included within a statutory landscape designation.

13.86 GLVIA3 states that the value of undesignated sites should also be considered. Table 1 of Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/21 supersedes Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 and provides a helpful guide for assessing these sites. A full assessment against a list of factors set out in the Technical Guidance Note is included in **Table 13-1**, below.

Table 13-1: Evaluation of the Value of the Site and its Immediate Context

Factor	Assessment	Notes
Natural Heritage	Low	The application area is not designated for ecological reasons and comprises mainly improved agricultural grassland with some boundary hedgerows / treelines.
Cultural Heritage	Low	The application area contains no designated heritage assets, with the closest being Kilmore Moated site (RMP CO096-088----), located 100 m south of the western extension area. Aside from the 100 m buffer a hedgerow along the southern boundary of the application area, provides some visual separation.
Landscape condition	Low	The agricultural landscape of the site and surrounding area is in good condition with typically well-maintained hedgerows. The rural nature of the landscape is compromised by the presence of the existing sand and gravel pit, including noise from the processing plant and machinery, as well as other man-made elements, such as electricity lines and the industrial site to the east.
Associations	Low	The application area and its context have no associations with art, literature or events.
Distinctiveness	Low	The application area is typical of lowland valley agricultural landscape. While the existing sand and gravel pit is a rare element in this landscape, it is not a distinctive feature. The site does not confer a strong sense of place.
Recreational	Low	There is no formal recreational access to the site.
Perceptual (Scenic)	Community	The agricultural nature of the extension area and surrounding lowland landscape may be appreciated by some residential properties and vehicle users along the roads to the north and south of the application area. However, there are no memorable or distinctive landmarks within the site or in the surrounding land.
Perceptual (Wilderness and tranquillity)	Low	The site and immediate surrounding area have no strong perceptual value, such as remoteness or wildness. Also, the noise from the existing processing plant reduces the tranquillity within the site.
Functional	Community	While the pasture fields have a low functional value, the hedgerows / treelines within the site provide habitat linkage into the wider landscape and have some local functionality as a pollinator habitat and a carbon-sink.

13.87 Using the factors set out in **Table 13-1**, it has been concluded that the site and its immediate context is of mostly low value: whilst the extension area's agricultural character is likely to be appreciated by local residents and passers-by and the treelines have some local functional value, there are no other factors of community value or elevating the site above community value.

13.88 The susceptibility of each of the landscape receptors is assessed in **Table 13-3**. This is combined with the previously assessed value and a judgement of the overall sensitivity provided as well.

Table 13-2: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Landscape Receptors	Value	Susceptibility	Overall Sensitivity
Individual Elements			
Pasture fields	**LOW**	The susceptibility of the existing pasture fields within the overall site to the proposed extraction works is high, as they would be largely removed. **HIGH**	**MEDIUM**
Treelines	**LOW**	The susceptibility of the treelines to the proposed works is low, as only two short sections will be affected and the majority of boundary vegetation will be retained. **LOW**	**LOW**
Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects			
Large-scale fields	**LOW**	The large-scale fields within the site have some ability to accommodate the proposed development, which is a similarly open land-use. This is reduced somewhat by the additional enclosure from the proposed planting, which is however in line with the surrounding landscape. **MEDIUM**	**LOW/ MEDIUM**
Generally simple form and colour with some diversity from adjacent pit	**LOW**	The simple form and colour of the existing site have some ability to accommodate the proposed development, which results in a similarly simple / monotone landcover Also, the diversity of different levels of ground disturbance / colonisation within the neighbouring existing sand and gravel pit reduces the susceptibility to change. **MEDIUM**	**LOW/ MEDIUM**
Overall Character			
LCT 6a	**LOCAL AUTHORITY**	LCT 6a is considered as having “the ability to accommodate limited development pressure” in the Draft Landscape Strategy of County Cork. The proposed development will be contained within parts of two agricultural fields, with most boundary vegetation retained. It is considered that these local landscape characteristics have some ability to accommodate the proposed development without transformational adverse effects to the wider landscape character. **MEDIUM**	**MEDIUM**

Magnitude of Landscape Change

13.89 **Table 13-3** describes the size and scale, geographical extent and duration / reversibility of the landscape effects for each landscape receptor, all of which contribute to the assessment of the magnitude of these effects.

Table 13-3: Magnitude of Landscape Change

Landscape Receptors	Factors	Magnitude of Change
Individual Elements		
Pasture fields	Size & Scale: **MEDIUM** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: The proposed development will result in the loss of half of two agricultural fields, which is moderated by the phased removal and restoration of the fields, as well as the vast agricultural landscape surrounding the site. While the landform within the affected area will (temporarily) change, the pit floor would be similarly flat / gently sloping as the existing ground, retaining the general character of the site. The visible extent of the change would be limited to the site and localised areas within 2km to the north-west and south-west. Also, the agricultural land-use will be restored in phases, with ca. half the extension area restored halfway through the operational period and the remainder of the site by year 17, i.e. a medium to long-term period.	**MEDIUM**
Treelines	Size & Scale: **SMALL** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: The proposed development will protect most of the treelines and all other boundary vegetation which currently surround the application area, but would require the removal of approximately 20 metres of treelines (including ca. 4 mature trees). The landscape proposals will add significant areas of tree / shrub planting (i.e. 7,200m^2), such that there would be a net increase in the number of trees on site. The visible extent of the change would be limited to the site and localised areas within 2km to the north-west and south-west. While the loss of the sections of treelines will be present for the duration of the operational period, this will be compensated / partially reversed by the early implementation of the majority of the proposed planting.	**SLIGHT**
Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects		
Large-scale fields	Size & Scale: **MEDIUM** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: The proposed development will cause an increased sense of enclosure, due to the proposed boundary berms and planting. However, the overall scale within the extension areas would remain large and some views to the south would still be available. The changes will be limited to the application site itself and would be in line with other medium sized fields in the wider landscape. The changes will be present for the duration of the operational period.	**MEDIUM**
Generally simple form and colour with some diversity from adjacent pit	Size & Scale: **MEDIUM** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: The proposed development will introduce forms and colour to the extension areas, which are similar to the adjacent existing pit, and which	**MEDIUM**

Landscape Receptors	Factors	Magnitude of Change
	will be locally noticeable, but will not change the composition of the landscape. The changes will be limited to the application site itself and will be present for the duration of the operational period.	
Overall Character		
LCT 6a	Size & Scale: **SMALL** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: Considering the proposed development is an extension to an existing sand and gravel pit, it will not introduce new elements into the study area. The agricultural land-use will be removed and restored in stages, during the operational stage, so that there will be no stage where the entire extension area will be affected. The proposed landscape and restoration planting will provide landscape elements in character with the surrounding land (bands of tree / shrub planting and hedgerows). Overall, the composition / character of the wider landscape will not be changed. No prominent landscape features (e.g. long sections of the existing treelines) will be removed, and the visible extent of the change will be limited to the site and localised areas within 2km to the north-west and south-west. The changes will be present for the duration of the operational period.	**SLIGHT**

Assessment of Landscape Effects and Significance

13.90 An assessment of the landscape effects during the operational phase, based on the sensitivity of each of the landscape receptors combined with the magnitude of change experienced by each of them, are provided in Table 13-4 below. The assessment also includes a judgment of the nature of the effect (i.e. negative/positive/neutral):

Table 13-4: Assessment of Landscape Effects

Landscape Receptors	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Landscape Effects	Nature of Effect
Individual Elements				
Pasture fields	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	**MODERATE**	Negative
Treelines	LOW	SLIGHT	**MINOR**	Negative
Aesthetic and Perceptual Aspects				
Large-scale fields	LOW / MEDIUM	MEDIUM	**MODERATE**	Negative
Generally simple form and colour with some diversity from adjacent pit	LOW / MEDIUM	MEDIUM	**MODERATE**	Negative
Overall Character				
LCT 6a	MEDIUM	SLIGHT	**MODERATE / MINOR**	Negative

13.91 **None of these landscape effects are assessed to be significant, including the moderate effects**.

Post – Operational Stage Landscape Effects

13.92 At the post-operational stage, all areas within the site will have been restored to agricultural land and the tree / shrub planting along the western and northern site boundaries will have matured. Over time, the hedgerows planted, as part of the restoration works will mature, and the remaining pit slopes will become colonised with locally occurring grass and scrub species over time. All of this will help the site merge more and more with the surrounding landscape, despite the remaining level changes. As a result, the effects on all landscape receptors will reduce to **MINOR / NEGLIGIBLE** over time and will become neutral.

Operational Stage Visual Effects

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

13.93 The value placed on each of the types of visual receptors identified above is described in Table 13-5 below. Also, the susceptibility to change of each of the receptor types (as per the LVIA Methodology in **Appendix 13-A**) is described and a judgement of the overall sensitivity made.

Table 13-5: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Visual Receptors	Value	Susceptibility	Overall Sensitivity
Residents			
North of the northern section of the proposed extension area (**Viewpoint B**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**HIGH** (Susceptible to changes in views, particularly from gardens and living rooms)	**MEDIUM**
Between 550-1,150 m to the north-west (**Viewpoint C**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**HIGH** (Susceptible to changes in views, particularly from gardens and living rooms)	**MEDIUM**
Between 650-2,000 m to the south-west (**Viewpoint D**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**HIGH** (Susceptible to changes in views, particularly from gardens and living rooms)	**MEDIUM**
Vehicle Users			
North of the northern section of the proposed extension area (**Viewpoint B**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**LOW** (Unlikely to be focused on views)	**LOW**
Between 550-1,150m to the north-west (**Viewpoint C**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**LOW** (Unlikely to be focused on views)	**LOW**
Within 1 km to the south-west (**Viewpoint D**)	**LOW** (No designated or locally promoted views)	**LOW** (Unlikely to be focused on views)	**LOW**

13.94 **Table 13-6** describes the size and scale, geographical extent and duration/reversibility of the visual effects for each visual receptor, all of which contribute to the assessment of the magnitude of these effects.

Table 13-6: Magnitude of Visual Change

Visual Receptors	Factors	Magnitude of Change
Residents and Vehicle Users		
North of the northern section of the proposed extension area (**Viewpoint B**)	Size & Scale: **MEDIUM** Geographical Extent: **NEGLIGIBLE** Duration / Reversibility: **SHORT-TERM – REVERSIBLE** Notes: The northern extraction area and associated screening berm and screen planting will become clearly visible, changing the appearance of the field in the foreground, but not affecting the views towards the landscape and ridge in the background. The berm will provide screening of much of the extraction works, which will be completed within the first two years following commencement of the development and fully restored to agriculture by year 3. While the proposed planting will not provide much screening of the extraction works (due to their short duration), as it matures it will screen views of the changed landform beyond, as well as act as a physical barrier and habitat link. It will form another layer of vegetation, as typically present in the wider landscape, and therefore blend smoothly into the existing views. The treeline at the bottom of the field will screen the extraction works in the western extension area and processing activities in the existing sand and gravel pit, for the duration of the operational phase. Overall the composition of the views will be altered to a moderate degree. Views area available intermittently from a very limited section of road and from three residential properties only. As mentioned, the extraction works within the visible parts of the application areas will be completed, and the area restored to agricultural land within 3 years.	**MEDIUM**
Between 550-1,150 m to the north-west (**Viewpoint C**)	Size & Scale: **SMALL** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** Notes: The western extraction area and associated screening berm and planting will become visible in a small proportion of the views from this area, changing the appearance of the field in the midground, but not affecting the views towards the landscape and ridge in the background. As the planting matures it will soften the views of the screening berm, which in turn will screen much of the extraction works. Any sections of the works that remain visible, will have the appearance of a ploughed field, which is not untypical in this agricultural landscape. Also, they will be seen in combination with the visible parts of the existing pit. All of the northern extraction area and most of the existing sand and gravel pit will be screened. Overall, the composition of the views will be partially altered. Views area available intermittently from a limited section of road and ca. 8 residential properties. All works will be completed, and the area restored to agricultural land within 17 years.	**SLIGHT**

Visual Receptors	Factors	Magnitude of Change
Between 650-2,000 m to the south-west (**Viewpoint D**)	Size & Scale: **SMALL** Geographical Extent: **SMALL** Duration / Reversibility: **MEDIUM/LONG-TERM – REVERSIBLE** **Notes**: The western extraction area and associated screening berm and planting will become visible in a small proportion of the view, changing the appearance of the field in the midground, but not affecting the views towards the lowland landscape in the foreground and ridge in the background. As the planting matures it will soften the views of the screening berm, which in turn will screen most of the extraction works. Any sections of the works that remain visible, will have the appearance of a ploughed field, which is not untypical in this agricultural landscape. Also, they will be seen in combination with the visible parts of the existing pit. Most of the northern extraction area and the existing sand and gravel pit will be screened. Overall, the composition of the views will be partially altered. Views area available intermittently from limited sections of two roads and ca. 10 residential properties. All works will be completed, and the area restored to agricultural land within 17 years.	**SLIGHT**

Assessment of Visual Effects and Significance

13.95 An assessment of the visual effects during the operational phase, based on the sensitivity of each of the visual receptors combined with the magnitude of change experienced by each of them, are provided in **Table 13-7** below. The assessment also includes a judgment of the nature of the effect (i.e. negative/positive/neutral):

Table 13-7: Assessment of Visual Effects

Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Visual Effects	Nature of Effect
Residents				
North of the northern section of the proposed extension area (**Viewpoint B**)	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	**MODERATE**	Negative
Between 550-1,150 m to the north-west (**Viewpoint C**)	MEDIUM	SLIGHT	**MODERATE / MINOR**	Negative
Between 650-2,000 m to the south-west (**Viewpoint D**)	MEDIUM	SLIGHT	**MODERATE / MINOR**	Negative
Vehicle Users				
North of the northern section of the proposed extension area (**Viewpoint B**)	LOW	MEDIUM	**MODERATE / MINOR**	Negative
Between 550-1,150m to the north-west (**Viewpoint C**)	LOW	SLIGHT	**MINOR**	Negative
Within 1 km to the south-west (**Viewpoint D**)	LOW	SLIGHT	**MINOR**	Negative

13.96 **None of these visual effects are assessed to be significant, including the moderate effects**.

Post – Operational Stage Visual Effects

13.97 At the post-operational stage, the site will have been restored to agricultural land and blend in with the surrounding agricultural landscape. Over time, the hedgerows planted as part of the restoration works will mature, and the remaining pit slopes will become colonised with locally occurring grass and scrub species over time. This will reduce the noticeability of the site in all available views, despite the remaining level changes in some areas. As a result, the effects on all visual receptors will reduce to **MINOR / NEGLIGIBLE** over time and will become neutral.

Direct/Indirect Effects

13.98 All landscape and visual effects described above are direct effects. The proposed development is not considered to have indirect effects in landscape and visual terms, i.e. the proposed development is unlikely to cause consequential changes to the surrounding landscape character areas or to existing views of the areas surrounding the application site.

Compliance with relevant Planning Policies

Mineral Extraction

13.99 The above impact assessment demonstrates that the landscape and visual effects, due to the proposed development will be moderate for some of the identified landscape and visual receptors and less for remainder of receptors. This is due to the fact that the proposed development will be visible from a very small area only and will not block views of the wider landscape. Also, the vast majority of the existing boundary / screening vegetation will be retained, and the operational effects, which will be carried out in several phases, including early restoration of some parts of the site, will last for 17 years overall, by which time the entire site will be restored to agricultural land, resulting in ultimately neutral effects.

13.100 It is therefore considered that the rural, scenic and residential amenities of the local area will be protected, as set out in section 8.17 of the current Cork CDP.

Green Infrastructure and Development

13.101 A Landscape and Restoration Plan (Incl. Tree Protection and Removal) was prepared for the proposed development and can be found in **Chapter 2** of this EIAR (refer to **Figure 2-4**) and planning drawing PL07. This contains information on the existing vegetation / habitats to be retained on the site and the restoration of the majority of the site to agricultural land in stages. It further contains information on substantial areas of proposed native tree / shrub planting and proposed native hedgerows, which will compensate the loss of a small amount of existing vegetation, as well as increase the biodiversity levels on site and provide additional habitat linkage.

13.102 It is considered that the Landscape and Restoration Plan meets the requirements of and is therefore in compliance with **Objective GI 14-3** contained in the current Cork CDP.

Landscape Character Assessment of County Cork

13.103 The above landscape and visual impact assessment had regard to the Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy and has shown that the landscape and visual effects, due to the proposed development on the whole will be moderate or less. No skylines or ridgelines will be affected by the proposed development, which will only require the removal of two short sections of a treeline (including ca. 4 mature trees).

13.104 In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed development is in compliance with **Objective GI 14-9** and **Objective GI 14-10** contained in the current Cork CDP.

Unplanned Events (i.e. Accidents)

13.105 It is highly unlikely that any unplanned events within the application area would result in noticeable landscape or visual impact.

Cumulative / Synergistic Impacts

13.106 Considering the proximity to the existing sand and gravel pit, partial screening of the extension area in all views and short operational time-frame, cumulative landscape or visual impacts with any other existing developments or developments currently in the planning process are highly unlikely.

Transboundary Impacts

13.107 The proposed development is not located in the vicinity of a national boundary. Therefore, transboundary landscape or visual impacts will not arise.

Interaction with Other Impacts

13.108 Some of the local residential receptors may experience a slightly elevated level of impact, due to an interaction of the visibility of extraction activities within the site and the noise and dust associated with these works.

‘Do-nothing Scenario’

13.109 If no extraction works within the proposed extension area were to take place, the two fields would continue to be used for agricultural purposes for the foreseeable future, resulting in no landscape or visual effects. The existing processing and ancillary area and access roads would be restored in line with P. Ref. 24/6269, i.e. to agricultural land, which is the same as currently proposed, but in a shorter timeframe.

Mitigation Measures

Operational Stage

13.110 The location within / close to an existing sand and gravel pit, as well as the substantial screening provided by topography and existing vegetation along the site boundaries and in the wider landscape, are the main mitigating factor minimising the landscape and visual impacts associated with the proposed development. It is proposed to retain all existing vegetation along the site boundaries but two short sections to create access points into the extension areas.

13.111 This combined with the phased landscape and restoration proposals, comprising screen planting, hedge planting and the restoration of the site to agricultural land, will help the integration of the development into the local landscape and into views. No further landscape or visual mitigation measures are considered necessary during the operational stage. Please refer to the Landscape and Restoration Plan, provided in **Chapter 2** of this EIAR Figure 2-4 and planning drawing PL07, for the landscape / restoration proposals including tree protection measures.

Post – Operational Stage

13.112 During the post-operational stage, the screen planting and hedgerows within the restored sand and gravel pit will continue to mature and the remaining pit slopes will become colonised by locally occurring grass and scrub species. The site will more and more merge with the surrounding landscape and into views. Additional landscape or visual mitigation measures at the post-operational stage are therefore not found necessary.

Residual Impact Assessment

Operational Stage

13.113 As no additional mitigation measures are required during the operational stage, the residual levels of landscape and visual effects will be as per the assessment above. In summary, the assessment has found that the proposed development will have moderate or less landscape effects during the operational stage (i.e. levels of impact not considered to be significant).

13.114 The visual effects on views ranges from none for the vast majority of locations within the study area, to moderate or less for a small number of locations within 2km to the north-west and south-west of the application area (i.e. impacts not regarded as significant).

Post – Operational Stage

13.115 As no additional mitigation measures are required during the post-operational stage, the residual landscape and visual effects will be as per the assessment above. In summary, on completion of all restoration works all predicted landscape and visual effects will reduce to minor / negligible.

Monitoring

13.116 There are no monitoring requirements, arising from this landscape and visual assessment.

References

Environmental Protection Agency (May 2022) Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, EPA Ireland

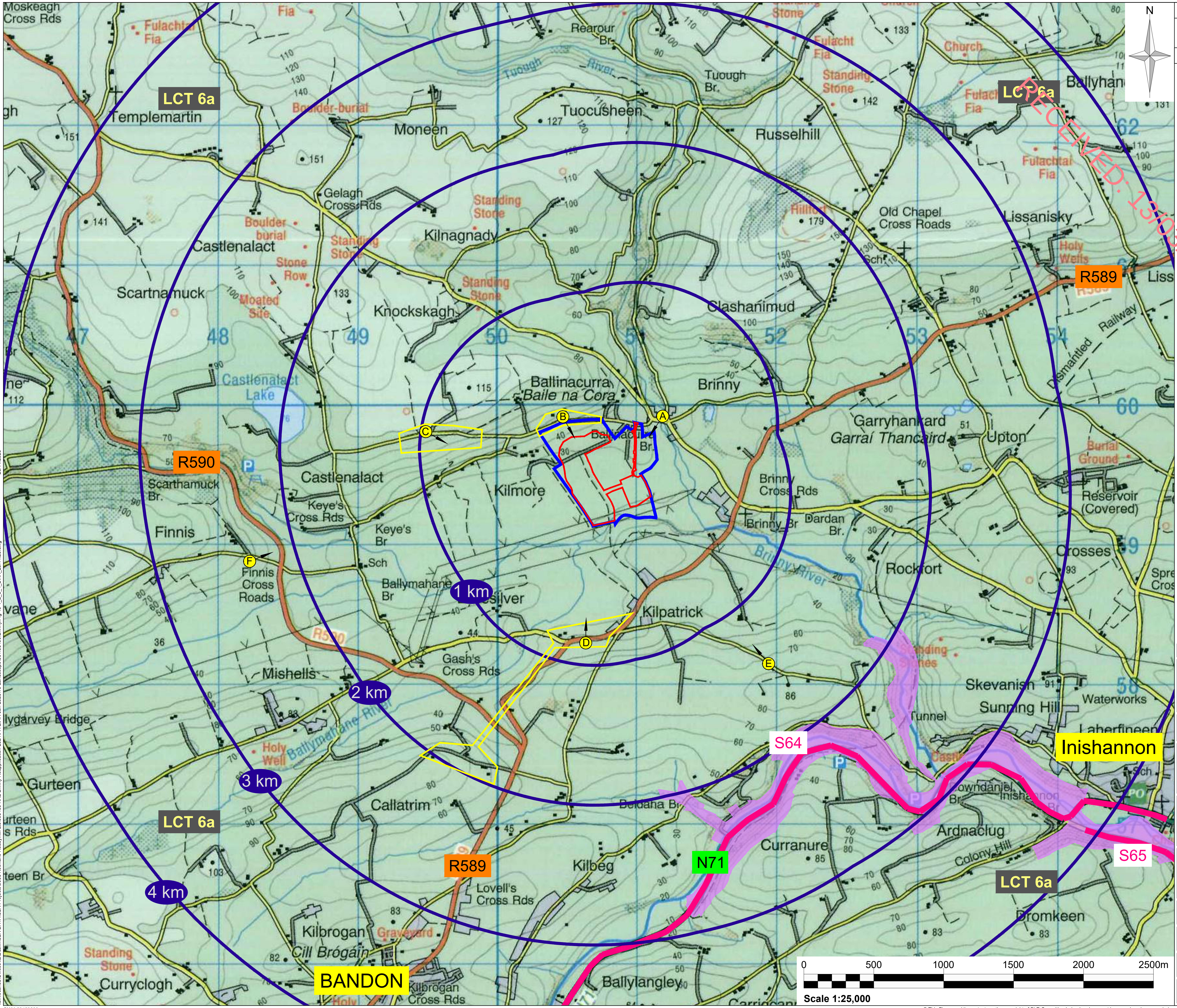
The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, Routledge

The Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations, Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (2024) Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Published August 2024: Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVLIA3)

Figures



Notes:

1. Extract from Ordnance Survey Map **No. 86.**

Legend:

- Applicants Land Interest Area
- Planning Application Area
- Viewpoint Locations
- Areas / Sections of road from where similar (intermittent) views of the application area to that of the sample viewpoint can be gained
- Approximate distance from Application Area

Landscape Designations:

- Scenic Route (Cork County Development Plan 2022)
- Landscape Character Type (LCT) Boundaries & Numbers (Cork Draft Landscape Strategy 2007)

Protected Sites:
(Refer to http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/)

- Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)

Rev	Amendments	Date	By	Chk	Auth

SLR Consulting Ireland
7 Dundrum Business Park,
Windy Arbour,
Dublin,
Ireland,
D14 N2Y7

www.slrconsulting.com

Client
Keohane Readymix Ltd

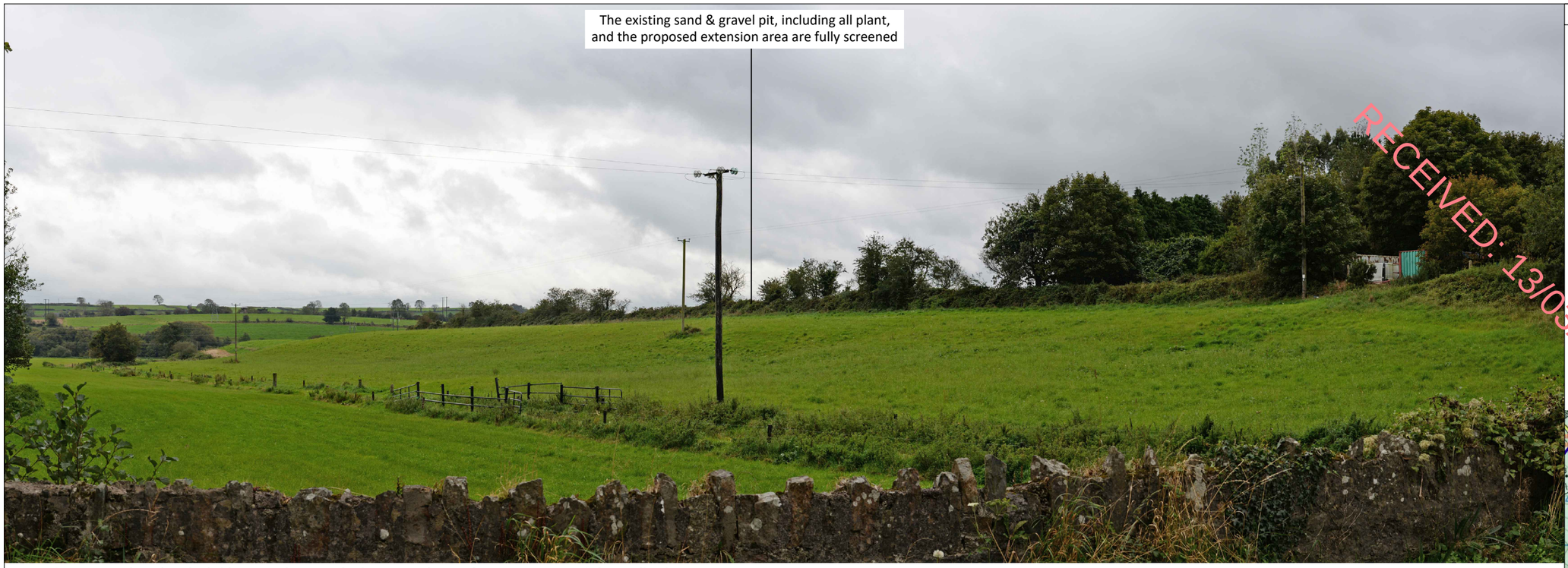
Project
Kilmore Townlands, Brinny, Co. Cork

Figure Title
Landscape Baseline and Viewpoint Locations

Scale	SLR Project No.		
1:25,000 @ A3	501.065499.00001		
Designed: CN	Drawn: CN	Checked: AM	Authorised: AM
Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25

Figure Number
FIGURE 13-1

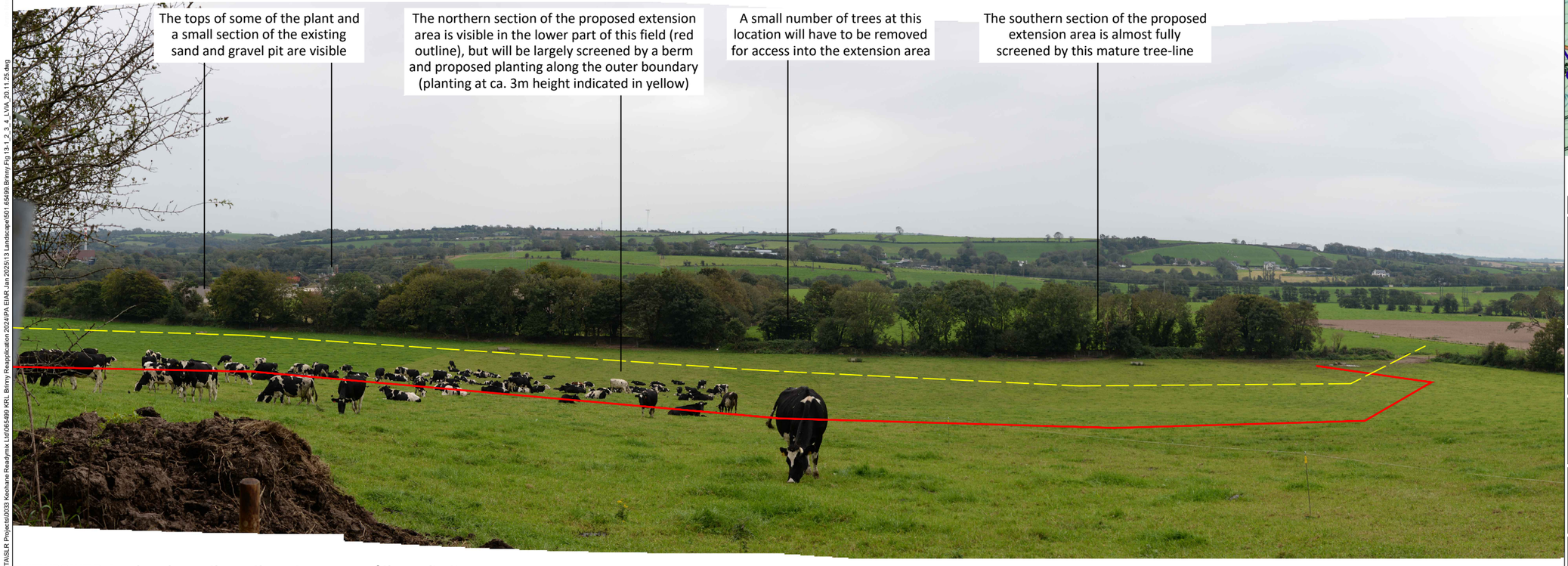
Rev.
0



VIEWPOINT A: Local road at the bridge over the Touogh River, near the north-eastern corner of the application area

Grid Coordinates (ITM): **551108:559963** Approximate Elevation: **35 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **150 m** Direction of View: **South-West** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 16:13**

Description: The existing sand & gravel pit, including all plant, is screened in this view by the slightly raised topography and vegetation along the eastern boundary of the application area. The proposed extension area, which is located beyond the existing pit, is also fully screened. Views towards the application area from locations to the north, north-east and east are generally screened by intervening topography and vegetation and the proposed development will not become visible in views from this area.



VIEWPOINT B: Local road, near the north-western corner of the application area

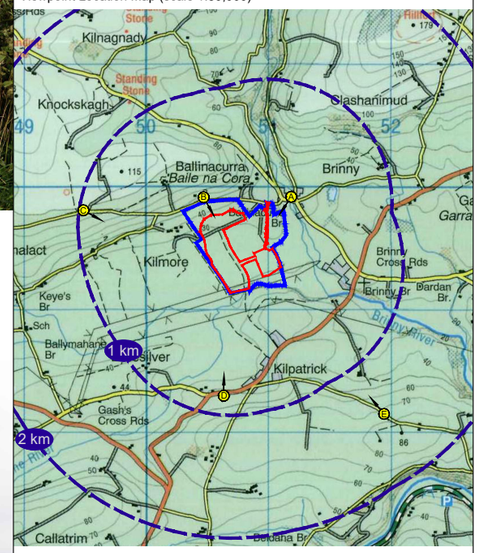
Grid Coordinates (ITM): **550406:559953** Approximate Elevation: **55 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **110 m** Direction of View: **South-East** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 11:39**

Description: Dense roadside vegetation screens views towards the application area from most locations along the local road to the north of the site. The above view was taken at a field gate. Similar views are only available through gaps in the hedgerow or when it has been recently cut. The existing sand & gravel pit, as well as the southern section of the extension area are almost fully screened by intervening vegetation, most of which will be retained as part of the proposed development. The northern section of the extension area is openly visible within the field. Overburden stripped from the extension area will be used to construct a screening berm and tree / shrub planting will be carried out on its outside. Both will reduce the visibility of the extraction works, with the tree / shrub planting softening the appearance of the screening berm and ultimately merging with the existing vegetation at the bottom of the field. Three residential properties to the north of this road experience similar, but less open views.

Legend:

- Applicants Land Interest Area
- Planning Application Area
- Viewpoint Locations (A)
- Approximate distance from Application Area (2 km)

Viewpoint Location Map (scale 1:50,000)



Rev	Amendments	Date	By	Chk	Auth

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Client: Keohane Readymix Ltd

Project: Kilmore Townlands, Brinny, Co. Cork

Figure Title: Viewpoints A & B

Scale	SLR Project No.
N/A @ A3	501.065499.00001

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CN	CN	AM	AM
Date 11/25	Date 11/25	Date 11/25	Date 11/25

Figure Number: **FIGURE 13-2** Rev. **0**

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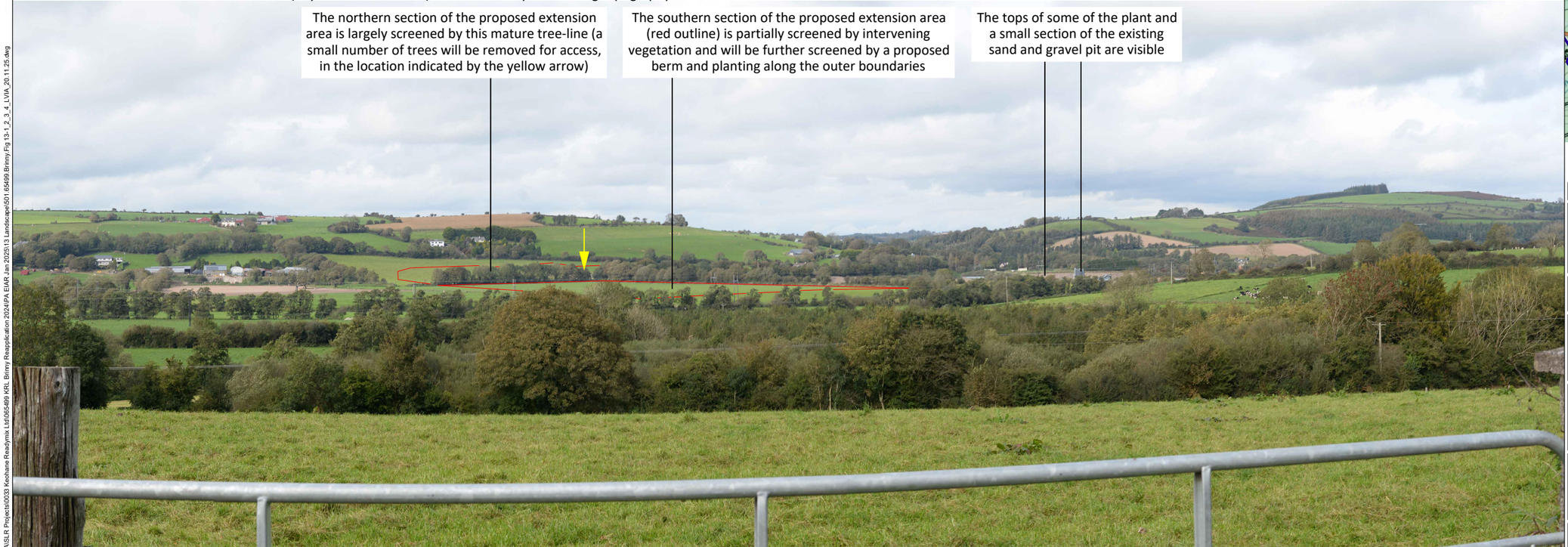
VIEWPOINT C: Local road, approximately 1km north-west of the application area

Grid Coordinates (ITM): **549413: 559903** Approximate Elevation: **100 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **920 m** Direction of View: **South-East** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 15:54**

Description: There are intermittent views of parts of the application area from an approximately 600m long elevated section of the local road to the north-west of the application area. The existing sand & gravel pit and the southern section of the extension area are partially visible in these views. The northern section of the extension area is screened by topography. Approximately 8 residential properties along this section of road experience similar views. The extraction works within the southern section of the extension area will become visible in these views. The works will however be partially screened by a screening berm and planting along the western boundary of the site, even more so when the planting matures. Views towards the application area from locations further north-west and to the north (beyond this local road) are screened by intervening topography.



VIEWPOINT D: R589 - Regional road, approximately 900m north-east of the junction with the R590

Grid Coordinates (ITM): **550608:558391** Approximate Elevation: **45 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **800 m** Direction of View: **North** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 15:16**

Description: There are intermittent views of parts of the application area from an approximately 350 m long section of the R589 and a 150 m section of the local road to the west of it, both in the townland of Kilpatrick. The southern section of the extension area is partially visible in these views, while most of the northern section and the existing sand & gravel pit are screened by intervening vegetation. Approximately, 10 residential properties along these roads and from a slightly elevated area further south-west experience similar views. The extraction works within the southern section of the extension area will become visible in these views. The works will however be partially screened by a screening berm and planting along the western / southern boundaries of the extension area, even more so when the planting matures. Views towards the application area from locations further south (beyond the R589) are screened by intervening topography.

Legend:

- Applicants Land Interest Area
- Planning Application Area
- Viewpoint Locations (A)
- Approximate distance from Application Area (2 km)

Viewpoint Location Map (scale 1:50,000)

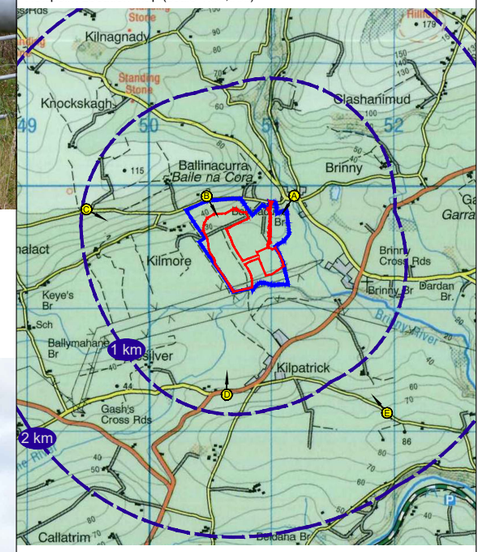


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Figure Title: Viewpoints C & D

Scale	SLR Project No.
N/A @ A3	501.065499.00001

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CN	CN	AM	AM
Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25	Date: 11/25

Figure Number: **FIGURE 13-3** Rev.: **0**

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VIEWPOINT E: Local road, approximately 1.2km south-east of the applicaiont area

Grid Coordinates (ITM): **551827:558281** Approximate Elevation: **70 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **1,400 m** Direction of View: **North-west** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 15:07**

Description: Views towards the application area from locations to the south-east and east are typically screened by roadside vegetation, as well as intervening topography and vegetation (as illustrated by the above view). In a small number of locations, such as the above, small sections of the existing sand & gravel pit can be glimpsed (in this case at a field gate). However, the proposed extension area is screened by intervening vegetation. The changes within the site, due to the proposed development, will be inconspicuous in these views, due to the small extent of visibility. Once the site is restored to agricultural land, it will fully merge with the surrounding landscape.

VIEWPOINT F: Local road, approximately 200m west of Finnis Cross Roads (junction with the R590)

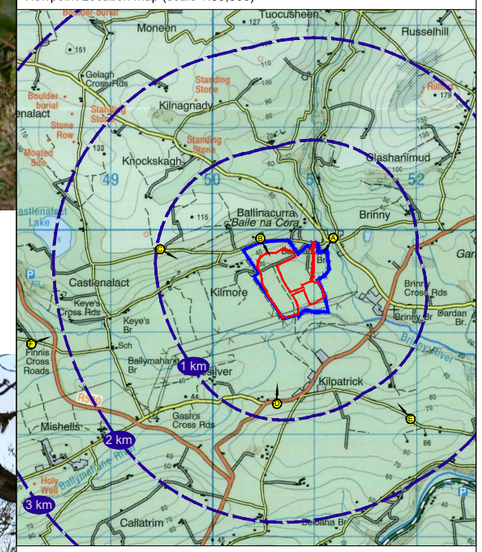
Grid Coordinates (ITM): **548246:559005** Approximate Elevation: **50 m AOD** Distance from planning application boundary: **2,300 m** Direction of View: **North-East** Date/time of photograph: **22/09/2020 @ 15:36**

Description: The existing sand & gravel pit and proposed extension area are fully screened in views from locations to the west of the application area, even in views from slightly elevated locations, such as the above.

Legend:

- Applicants Land Interest Area
- Planning Application Area
- Viewpoint Locations (A)
- Approximate distance from Application Area (2 km)

Viewpoint Location Map (scale 1:60,000)



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Project: Kilmore Townlands, Brinny, Co. Cork

Figure Title: Viewpoints E & F

Scale	SLR Project No.
N/A @ A3	501.065499.00001

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Date 11/25	Date 11/25	Date 11/25	Date 11/25

Figure Number: **FIGURE 13-4** Rev.: **0**

Appendix 13-A Method used in Assessing Landscape and Visual Effects

Introduction

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify the effects of development on *"landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity"* (GLVIA3, paragraph 1.1). GLVIA3F[4] (paragraph 2.22) states that these two elements, although inter-related, should be assessed separately. GLVIA3 is the main source of guidance on LVIA.

Landscape is a definable set of characteristics resulting from the interaction of natural, physical and human factors: it is a resource in its own right. Its assessment is distinct from visual assessment, which considers effects on the views and visual amenity of different groups of people at particular locations. Clear separation of these two topics is recommended in GLVIA3.

"*Notes and Clarifications on aspects of GLVIA3*" (Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2024/01, published August 2024) makes it clear at section 2.0 that Townscape and Seascape assessments should follow the same process as LVIA, and therefore also follow the guidance in GLVIA3.

As GLVIA3 (paragraph 2.23) states, professional judgement is an important part of the LVIA process: whilst there is scope for objective measurement of landscape and visual changes, much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements. It is critical that these judgements are based upon a clear and transparent method so that the reasoning can be followed and examined by others.

Impacts can be defined as the action being taken, whereas effects are the changes result from that action. This method of assessment assesses landscape and visual effects.

Landscape and visual effects can be positive, negative or neutral in nature. Positive effects are those which enhance and/or reinforce the characteristics which are valued. Negative effects are those which remove and/or undermine the characteristics which are valued. Neutral effects are changes which are consistent with the characteristics of the landscape or view. LI TGN 2024/01 notes at section 3(7) that the assessment of the level of effect and the nature of effect should be independent of each other.

Landscape and visual effects can result directly from the development itself (direct effects), or may be indirect changes (which are not a direct result of the development but occur as a result of a more complex pathway, such as changes to drainage patterns or perceptual changes further from the proposed development).

Landscape and visual effects can also be cumulative, which are the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other developments, particularly those which are recently consented or which have been applied for.

In LVIAs which form part of an EIA, it is necessary for identify significant and non-significant effects. In non-EIA LVIAs, also known as appraisals, the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in so doing, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant given that the exercise is not being undertaken for EIA purposes (see GLVIA3 statement of clarification 1/13 10-06-13, Landscape Institute).

[4] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Third Edition, April 2013)

Landscape Effects

Landscape, as defined in the European Landscape Convention, is defined as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*, (Council of Europe, 2000). Landscape does not apply only to special or designated places, nor is it limited to countryside.

GLVIA3 (paragraph 5.34) recommends that the effect of the development on landscape receptors is assessed. Landscape receptors are the components of the landscape that are likely to be affected by the proposed development and can include individual elements (such as hedges or buildings), aesthetic and perceptual characteristics (for example sense of naturalness, tranquillity or openness), or, at a larger scale, the character of a defined character area or landscape type. Designated areas (such as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)) are also landscape receptors.

This assessment is being undertaken because the proposed development has the potential to remove or add elements to the landscape, to alter aesthetic or perceptual aspects, and to add or remove characteristics and thus potentially change overall character.

Judging landscape effects requires a methodical assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape receptors to the proposed development and the magnitude of effect which would be experienced by each receptor.

Landscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of landscape receptors is assessed by combining assessments of the value attached to each receptor and the susceptibility of each receptor to the type of change which is proposed. (GLVIA3, paragraph 5.39).

Value Attached to Landscape Receptors

Landscape receptors may be valued at community, local, national or international level. Existing landscape designations provide the starting point for this assessment, as set out in **Table 13-A-1** below.

The table sets out the interpretation of landscape designations in terms of the value attached to different landscape receptors. As GLVIA3 (paragraph 5.24) notes, at the local scale of an LVIA study area it may be found that the landscape value of a specific area may sometimes be different to that suggested by the presence or absence of a formal designation.

Table 13-A-1: Interpretation of Landscape Designations

Designation	Description	Value
World Heritage Sites, candidate World Heritage Site	Unique sites, features or areas identified as being of international importance according to UNESCO criteria. Consideration should be given to their settings especially where these contribute to the attributes of outstanding universal value for which such an area of landscape is valued.	International
National Parks	Areas of landscape identified as being of national importance for their natural beauty and the opportunities they offer for outdoor recreation. Consideration should be given to their	National

Designation	Description	Value
	settings[5] especially where these contribute to the special qualities for which the landscape is valued.	
Local Landscape Designations (such as High Amenity Areas) included in local planning documents.	Areas of landscape identified as having importance at the local authority level.	Local Authority
Undesignated landscapes of community value	Landscapes which do not have any formal designation, and lack the indicators of landscape value set out in Table 1 of TGN 02/21, but which are assessed as having value to local communities.	Local Authority / Community
Landscapes of low value	Landscapes in poor condition or fundamentally altered by the presence of intrusive man-made structures.	Low

Where landscapes are not designated and where no other local authority guidance on value is available, an assessment is made by reference to criteria in the **Table 13A-2** below. This is based on Table 1 of Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/21. These factors are not fixed and should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. When assessing landscape value of a site it is important to consider not only the site itself but also its context.

Landscapes may be judged to be of local authority or community value on the basis of one or more of these factors. There may also be occasional circumstances where an undesignated landscape may be judged to be of national value, for example where it has a clear connection with a nationally designated landscape, or is otherwise considered to be of equivalent value to a national designation. Similarly, on occasions there may be areas within designated landscapes that do not meet the designation criteria, or demonstrate the key characteristics/special qualities in a way that is consistent with the rest of the designated area.

An overall assessment is made for each landscape receptor, based on an overview of the above criteria, to determine its value - whether for example it is comparable to a local authority landscape designation or similar, or whether it is of value to local people and communities. For example, an intact landscape in good condition, where scenic quality, tranquillity, and/or conservation interests make a particular contribution to the landscape, or where there are important cultural or historical associations, might be of equivalent value to a local landscape designation. Conversely, a degraded landscape in poor condition, with no particular scenic qualities or natural or cultural heritage interest is likely to be considered of limited landscape value.

[5] LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 5(13) that the setting of protected landscapes is "*generally created in policy and is not a designation (or a receptor) in its own right (unlike the settings of heritage assets). The extent of the setting of a designated landscape for LVIA purposes is not geographically defined and will vary with the nature of the development proposed. In LVIA, the question would remain whether the changes in the setting (i.e. the landscape nearby but outside the designated area) would affect the designated landscape in terms of effects on its special qualities and, if so, to what degree*".

Table 13-A-2: Factors Considered in Assessing the Value of Non-Designated Landscapes

Factor	Criteria
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest. Presence of wildlife and habitats that contribute to the sense of place. Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services.
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest. Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets. Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth.
Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure. Absence of detracting/incongruous features.
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity or place. Presence of distinctive features that are characteristic of a place, or presence of rare/unusual features that confer a strong sense of place. Includes landscape that makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement.
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important. Includes open access areas, common land and rights of way where appreciation of the landscape is an important element of the experience. Landscape that forms part of a view that that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity.
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense. Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features. Strong aesthetic qualities. Visual diversity or contrasts. Memorable/distinctive views or landmarks, or landscape that contributes to these.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably remoteness, wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape. Natural hydrological systems, important parts of the green infrastructure network, pollinator rich habitats. Landscapes that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities.

Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors to Change

As set out in GLVIA3, susceptibility refers to the ability of the landscape receptor to "*accommodate the proposed development without undue adverse consequences for the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies*". Judgement of susceptibility is particular to the specific characteristics of the proposed development and the ability of a particular landscape or feature to accommodate the type of change proposed, and makes reference to the criteria set out in **Table 13-A-3** below. Aspects of the character of the landscape that may be affected by a particular type of development include landform, skylines, land cover, enclosure, human influences including settlement pattern and aesthetic and perceptual aspects such as the scale of the landscape, its form, line, texture, pattern and grain, complexity, and its sense of movement, remoteness, wildness or tranquillity.

For example, an urban landscape which contains a number of industrial buildings may have a low susceptibility to buildings of a similar scale and character. Conversely a rural landscape containing only remote farmsteads is likely to have a high susceptibility to large-scale built development.

Table 13-A-3: Landscape Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	The landscape receptor is highly susceptible to the proposed development because the key characteristics of the landscape have no or very limited ability to accommodate it without transformational adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.
Medium	The landscape receptor is moderately susceptible to the proposed development because the relevant characteristics of the landscape have some ability to accommodate it without transformational adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.
Low	The landscape receptor has low susceptibility to the proposed development because the relevant characteristics of the landscape are generally able to accommodate it without transformational adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.

Defining Sensitivity

As has been noted above, the sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined in terms of the relationship between value and susceptibility to change as indicated in **Figure 13-A-1** below. This summarises the general nature of the relationship, but it is not formulaic and only indicates general categories of sensitivity. Professional judgement is applied on a case-by-case basis in determining sensitivity of individual receptors with the diagram only serving as a guide.

Table 13-A-4 below summarises the nature of the relationship, but it is not formulaic and only indicates general categories of sensitivity. Judgements are made about each landscape receptor, with the table serving as a guide.

Where, taking into account the component judgements about the value and susceptibility of the landscape receptor, sensitivity is judged to lie between levels, an intermediate assessment of high/medium or medium/low is adopted. In a few limited cases a category of less than low (very low) may be used where the landscape is of low value and susceptibility is particularly low.

Figure 13-A-1: Levels of Sensitivity defined by Value and Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors

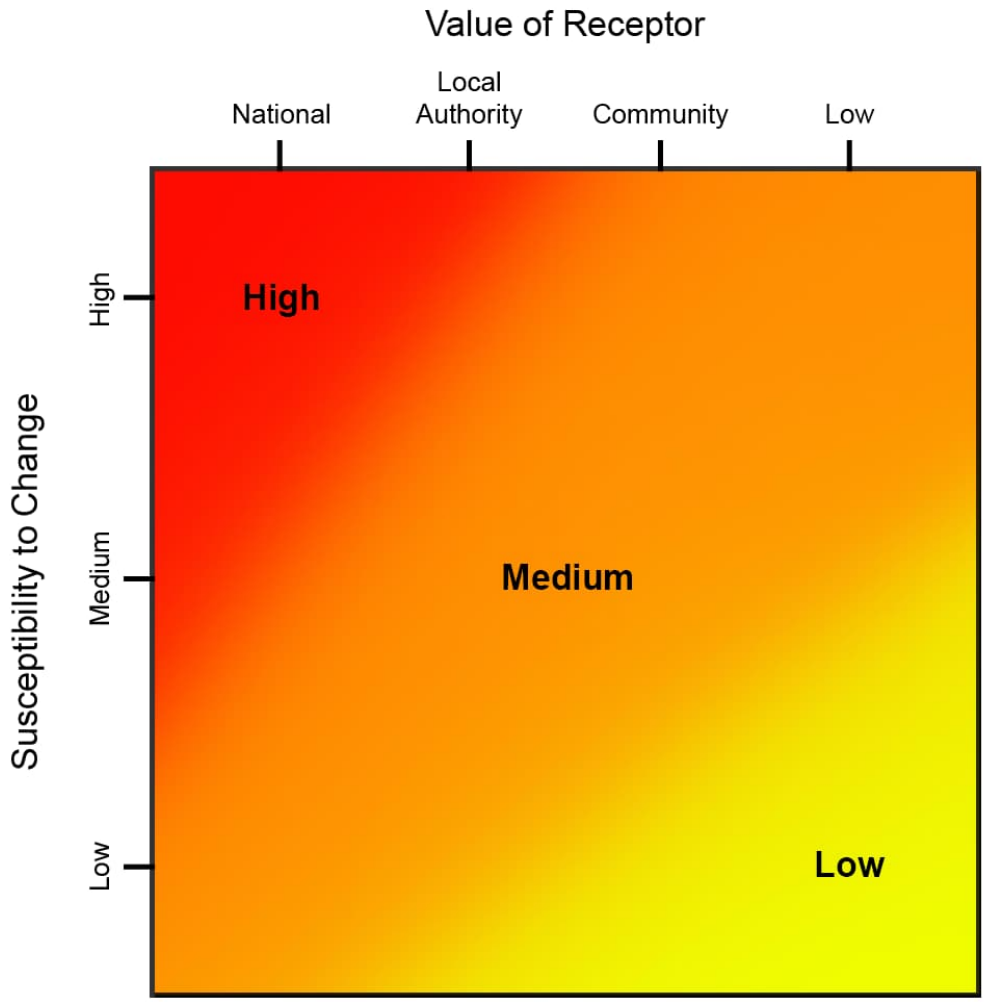


Table 13-A-4: Example Levels of Sensitivity defined by Value and Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	The landscape receptor is of international or national value and is considered to have high susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of national value and is considered to have medium susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development
Medium	The landscape receptor is of international or national value and is considered to have low susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of local authority value and is considered to have high susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of local authority value and is considered to have medium susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of community value and is considered to have high susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development
Low	The landscape receptor is of local authority value and is considered to have low susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of community value and is considered to have medium susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development OR The landscape receptor is of community value and is considered to have low susceptibility to the effects of the proposed development

Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of landscape change is established by assessing the size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and the duration and potential reversibility of the change. LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 3(3) that "*it is likely that size/scale of effect will be the most important factor, with geographical extent and duration/reversibility considered as 'modifiers'*".

Size and Scale of Change

The size and/or scale of change in the landscape takes into consideration the following factors:

- the extent/proportion of landscape elements lost or added; and/or
- the degree to which aesthetic/perceptual aspects are altered; and
- whether this is likely to change the key characteristics of the landscape.

The criteria used to assess the size and scale of landscape change are based upon the amount of change that will occur as a result of the proposed development, as described in Table 13A-5 below.

Table 13-A-5: Magnitude of Landscape Change - Size/Scale of Change

Category	Description
Large level of landscape change	There would be a large level of change in landscape character, and especially to the key characteristics if, for example, the proposed development: • becomes a dominant feature in the landscape, changing the balance of landscape characteristics; and/or • would dominate important visual connections with other landscape types, where this is a key characteristic of the area.
Medium level of landscape change	There would be a medium level of change in landscape character, and especially to the key characteristics if, for example: • the proposed development would be more prominent but would not change the overall balance or composition of the landscape; and/or • key views to other landscape types may be interrupted intermittently by the proposed development, but these views would not be dominated by them.
Small level of landscape change	There would be a small level of change in landscape character, and especially to the key characteristics if, for example: • there would be no introduction of new elements into the landscape and the proposed development would not significantly change the composition/balance of the landscape.
Negligible/no level of landscape change	There would be a negligible or no level of change in landscape character, and especially to the key characteristics if, for example, the proposed development would be a small element and/or would be a considerable distance from the receptor.

Geographical Extent of Change

The geographical extent of landscape change is assessed by determining the area over which the changes will influence the landscape, as set out in **Table 13-A-6**. For example, this could be at the site level, in the immediate setting of the site, or over some or all of the landscape character types, or areas affected.

Table 13-A-6: Magnitude of Landscape Change - Geographical Extent

Category	Description
Large extent of landscape change	Affects a wider area, far from the site itself, or affects a large proportion of the landscape receptor.
Medium extent of landscape change	Landscape change extends beyond the site boundaries, or affects a medium proportion of the landscape receptor.
Small extent of landscape change	Change affecting a localised area, often focused on the site itself, or affects a small proportion of the landscape receptor.
Negligible extent of landscape change	The change will affect only a negligible extent of the landscape receptor under consideration.

Duration and Reversibility of Change

The duration of the landscape change is categorised in **Table 13-A-7** below, which considers whether the change will be permanent and irreversible or temporary and reversible. The levels of duration are based on the EPA Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (May 2022).

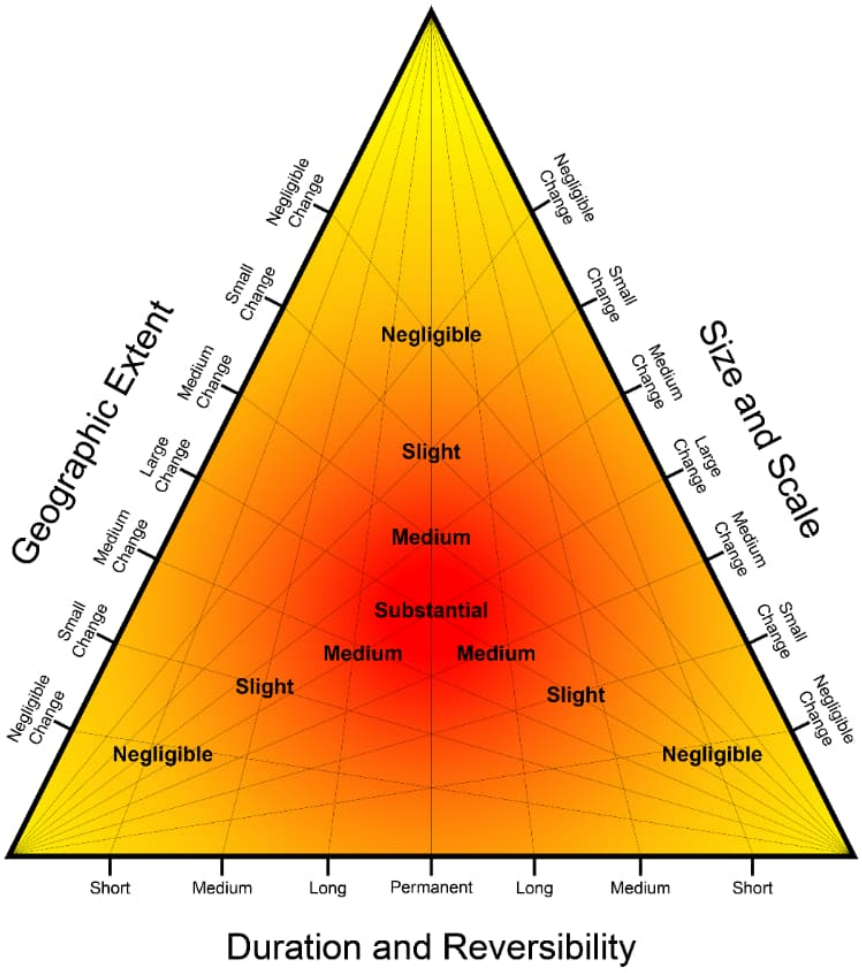
Table 13-A-7: Magnitude of Landscape Change - Duration and Reversibility

Category	Description
Permanent/ Irreversible	Effects that will last for over 60 years and are deemed irreversible.
Long-term reversible	Effects that will last between 15 and 60 years and are theoretically reversible.
Medium-term reversible	Effects that will last between 7 and 15 years and are theoretically reversible.
Temporary/ Short-term reversible	Effects that will last from 0 to 7 years – likely to include construction effects.

Deciding on Overall Magnitude of Landscape Change

The relationships between the three factors that contribute to assessment of the magnitude of landscape effects are illustrated graphically, as a guide, in **Figure 13-A-2** below. Various combinations are possible, and the overall magnitude of each effect is determined using professional judgement rather than by formulaic application of the relationships in the figure.

Figure 13-A-2: Determining the Magnitude of Landscape Change

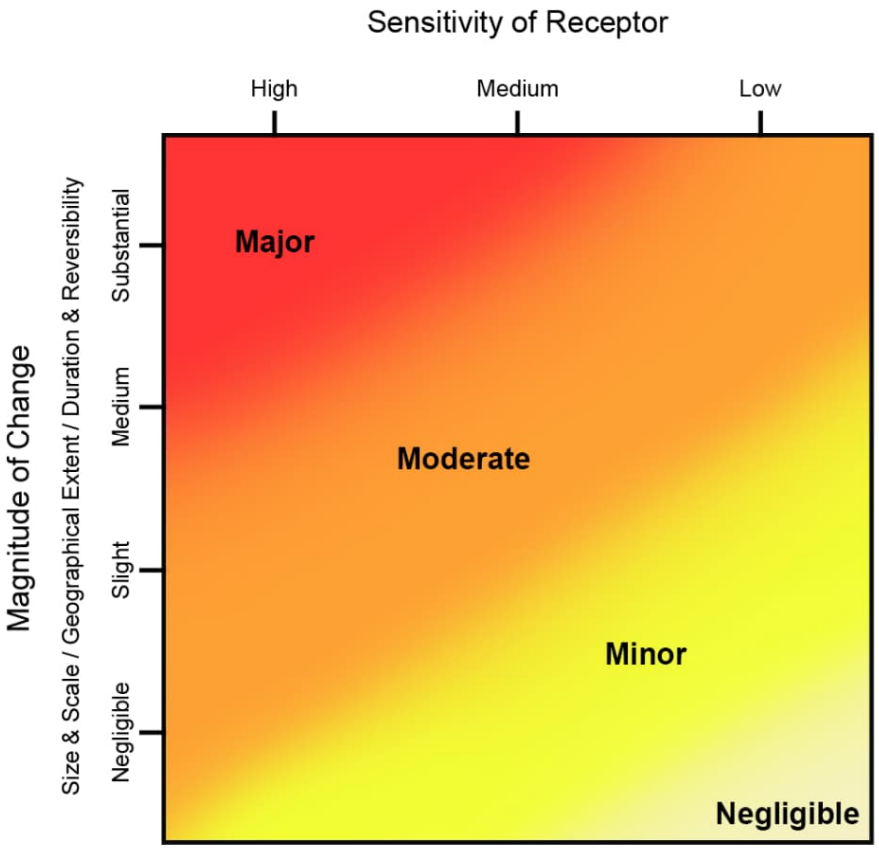


Assessment of Landscape Effects

The assessment of landscape effects is defined in terms of the relationship between the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of the change. The diagram below (**Figure 13-A-3**) summarises the nature of the relationship, but it is not formulaic. Judgements are made about each landscape effect using this diagram as a guide.

Major and Major/Moderate effects are regarded as important planning considerations in landscape and visual appraisals (or significant effects in landscape and visual impact assessments). Moderate effects are not generally considered to be important planning considerations/significant effects, although the assessor may conclude that some moderate effects could constitute significant effects in certain circumstances: for example, there may be a concentration of several moderate effects in one location, or a moderate effect may occur for a particularly sensitive receptor or be of a particularly high magnitude.

Figure 13-A-3: Assessment of Landscape Effects



Visual Effects

Visual effects are the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. Visual receptors are the people whose views may be affected by the proposed development. They generally include users of walking trails or other recreational facilities or attractions; travellers who may pass through the study area because they are visiting, living or working there; residents living in the study area, either as individuals or, more often, as a community; and people at their place of work:

- Communities within settlements (i.e. towns and villages);
- Residents of individual properties and clusters of properties outside settlements;
- People using nationally designated or regionally promoted footpaths and cycle routes;
- Visitors at publicly accessible sites including, for example, gardens and designed landscapes, historic sites, and other visitor attractions or outdoor recreational facilities where the landscape or seascape is an important part of the experience;
- Users of outdoor sport and recreation facilities;
- Visitors staying at caravan parks or camp sites;
- Road users on recognised scenic or promoted tourist routes;
- Users of other roads;
- Rail passengers;
- People at their place of work.

LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 6(1) that visual assessment should focus on the way that communities experience views from public locations. It notes that *"views from houses and individual properties are a matter of private amenity, noting that it is an established planning principle that there is no right to a view".*

Judging visual effects requires a methodical assessment of the sensitivity of the visual receptors to the proposed development and the magnitude of effect which would be experienced by each receptor.

Viewpoints are chosen, ideally in discussion with the competent authority and other stakeholders and interested parties, for a variety of reasons but most commonly because they represent views experienced by relevant groups of people.

Visual Sensitivity

Sensitivity of visual receptors is assessed by combining an assessment of the susceptibility of visual receptors to the type of change which is proposed with the value attached to the views (GLVIA3, paragraph 6.30).

Value Attached to Views

Different levels of value are attached to the views experienced by particular groups of people at particular viewpoints. Assessment of value takes account of a number of factors, including:

- Recognition of the view through some form of planning designation or by its association with particular heritage assets; and

- The popularity of the viewpoint, in part denoted by its appearance in guidebooks, literature or art, or on tourist maps, by information from stakeholders and by the evidence of use including facilities provided for its enjoyment (seating, signage, parking places, etc.); and
- Other evidence of the value attached to views by people including consultation with local planning authorities, some of whom have carried out assessments of valued views, and professional assessment of the quality of views.

The assessment of the value of views is summarised in **Table 13-A-8** below. These criteria are provided for guidance only.

Table 13-A-8: Examples of Factors Considered in assessing the Value Attached to Views

Value	Criteria
High	Views from nationally (and in some cases internationally) known viewpoints, which: • have some form of planning designation; or • are associated with internationally or nationally designated landscapes or important heritage assets; or • are promoted in sources such as maps and tourist literature; or • are linked with important and popular visitor attractions where the view forms a recognised part of the visitor experience; or • have important cultural associations. Also, may include views judged by assessors to be of high value.
Medium	Views from viewpoints of some importance at regional or local levels, which: • have some form of local planning designation associated with locally designated landscapes or areas of equivalent landscape quality; or • are promoted in local sources; or • are linked with locally important and popular visitor attractions where the view forms a recognised part of the visitor experience; or • have important local cultural associations. Also, may include views judged by the assessors to be of medium value.
Low	Views from viewpoints which, although they may have value to local people: • have no formal planning status; or • are not associated with designated or otherwise high-quality landscapes; or • are not linked with popular visitor attractions; or • have no known cultural associations. Also, may include views judged by the assessors to be of low value.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

The susceptibility of different types of people to changes in views is mainly a function of:

- The occupation or activity of the viewer at a given viewpoint; and
- The extent to which the viewer's attention or interest be focussed on a particular view and the visual amenity experienced at a given view.

As LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 6(2), *"visual susceptibility is not influenced by the development type, which would be assessed as part of the magnitude of effect".*

The susceptibility of different groups of viewers is assessed with reference to the guidance in **Table 13-A-9** below. However, as noted in GLVIA3 "*this division is not black and white and, in reality, there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change*". Therefore, the susceptibility of each group of people affected is considered for each project and assessments are included in the relevant text in the report.

Table 13-A-9: Visual Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	Criteria
High	Residents; People engaged in outdoor recreation where their attention is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views; Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are an important part of the experience; Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by the residents
Medium	Travellers on scenic routes where the attention of drivers and passengers is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views. People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which may involve appreciation of views e.g. users of golf courses.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve appreciation of views; People at their place of work whose attention is focused on their work; Travellers, where the view is incidental to the journey.

Defining Sensitivity

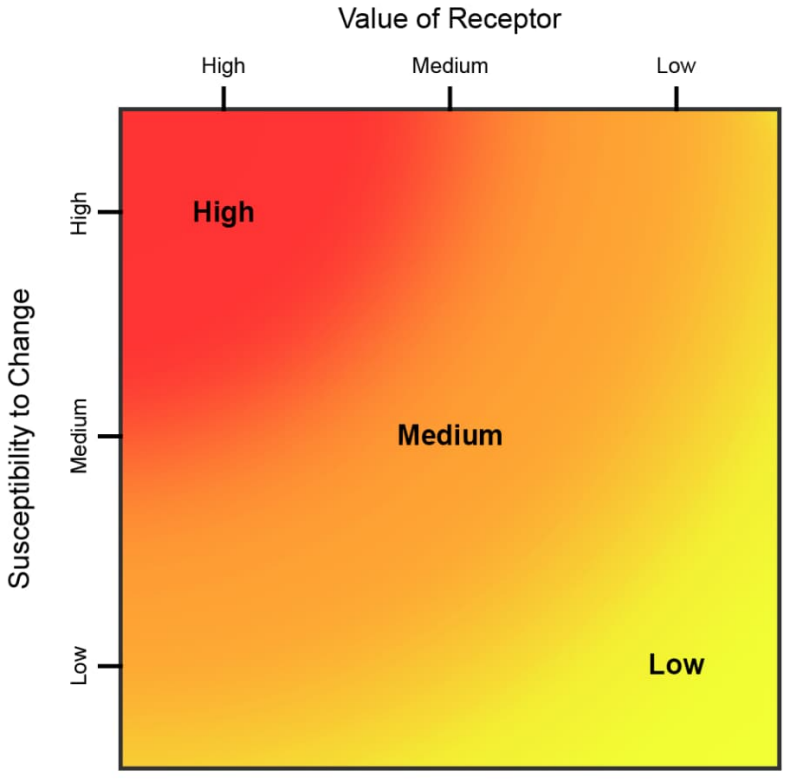
The sensitivity of visual receptors is defined in terms of the relationship between the value of views and the susceptibility of the different receptors to the proposed change. **Figure 13-A-4** below summarises the nature of the relationship; it is not formulaic and only indicates general categories of sensitivity. Judgements are made on merit about each visual receptor, with the table below only serving as a guide. **Table 13-A-10** sets down the main categories that may occur but again it is not comprehensive, and other combinations may occur.

Table 13-A-10: Example Levels of Sensitivity defined by Value and Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	Criteria
High	The visual receptor group is highly susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of high value. OR The visual receptor group has a medium level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of high value. OR The visual receptor group is highly susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the medium level.

Sensitivity	Criteria
Medium	The visual receptor group is highly susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the low level. OR The visual receptor group has a medium level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the medium level. OR The visual receptor group has a low level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the high level.
Low	The visual receptor group has a medium level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the low level. OR The visual receptor group has a low level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the medium level. OR The visual receptor group has a low level of susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity and relevant views are of value at the low level.

Figure 13-A-4: Levels of Sensitivity Defined by Value and Susceptibility of Visual Receptor Groups



Magnitude of Visual Change

The magnitude of visual change is established by assessing the size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and the duration and potential reversibility of the change. LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 3(3) that "*it is likely that size/scale of effect will be the most important factor, with geographical extent and duration/reversibility considered as 'modifiers'*".

Size and Scale of Change

The criteria used to assess the size/scale of visual change are as follows:

- the scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view, changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development and distance of view;
- the degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of factors such as form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and
- the nature of the view of the proposed development, for example whether views will be full, partial or glimpses or sequential views while passing through the landscape.

The above criteria are summarised in the **Table 13A-11** below:

Table 13-A-11: Magnitude of Visual Change – Size/Scale of Change

Category	Criteria
Large visual change	The proposed development will cause a complete or large change in the view, resulting from the loss of important features or the addition of significant new ones, to the extent that this will substantially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers.
Medium visual change	The proposed development will cause a clearly noticeable change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will alter to a moderate degree the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial/intermittent.
Small visual change	The proposed development will cause a perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will partially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial only.
Negligible visual change	The proposed development will cause a barely perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will barely alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be glimpsed only.
No change	The proposed development will cause no change to the view.

Geographical Extent of Change

The geographical extent of the visual change identified at representative viewpoints is assessed by reference to a combination of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), where this has been prepared, and field work, and consideration of the criteria in **Table 13A-12** below. Representative viewpoints are used as 'sample' points to assess the typical change experienced by different groups of visual receptors at different distances and directions from the proposed development. The geographical extent of the visual change is judged for each group of receptors: for example, people using a particular route or public amenity, drawing on the viewpoint assessments, plus information about the distribution of that particular group of people in the Study Area.

LI TGN 2024/01 states at section 6(8) that geographic extent should primarily refer to the extent of the viewing area that is affected (for example the length of a footpath or the proportion of a community).

Thus, low levels of change identified at representative viewpoints may be extensive or limited in terms of the geographical area they are apparent from: for example, a view of the proposed development from elevated Access Land may be widely visible from much or all of the accessible area, or may be confined to a small proportion of the area. Similarly, a view from a public footpath may be visible from a single isolated viewpoint, or over a prolonged stretch of the route. Community views may be experienced from a small number of dwellings, or affect numerous residential properties.

Table 13-A-12: Magnitude of Visual Change – Geographical Extent of Change

Category	Description
Large extent of visual change	The proposed development is seen by the group of receptors in many locations across the Study Area or from the majority of a linear route and/or by large numbers of viewers; or the effect on the specific view(s) is extensive.
Medium extent of visual change	The proposed development is seen by the group of receptors from a medium number of locations across the Study Area or from a medium part of a linear route and/or by a medium number of viewers; or the effect on the specific view is moderately extensive.
Small extent of visual change	The proposed development is seen by the group of receptors at a small number of locations across the Study Area or from only limited sections of a linear route and/or by a small number of viewers; or the effect on a specific view is small.
Negligible extent of visual change	The proposed development is either not visible in the Study Area or is seen by the receptor group at only one or two locations or from a very limited section of a linear route and/or by only a very small number of receptors; or the effect on the specific view is barely discernible.

Duration and Reversibility of Change

The duration of the visual change at viewpoints is categorised in **Table 13A-13** below, which considers whether views will be permanent and irreversible or temporary and reversible. The levels of duration are based on the EPA Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (May 2022).

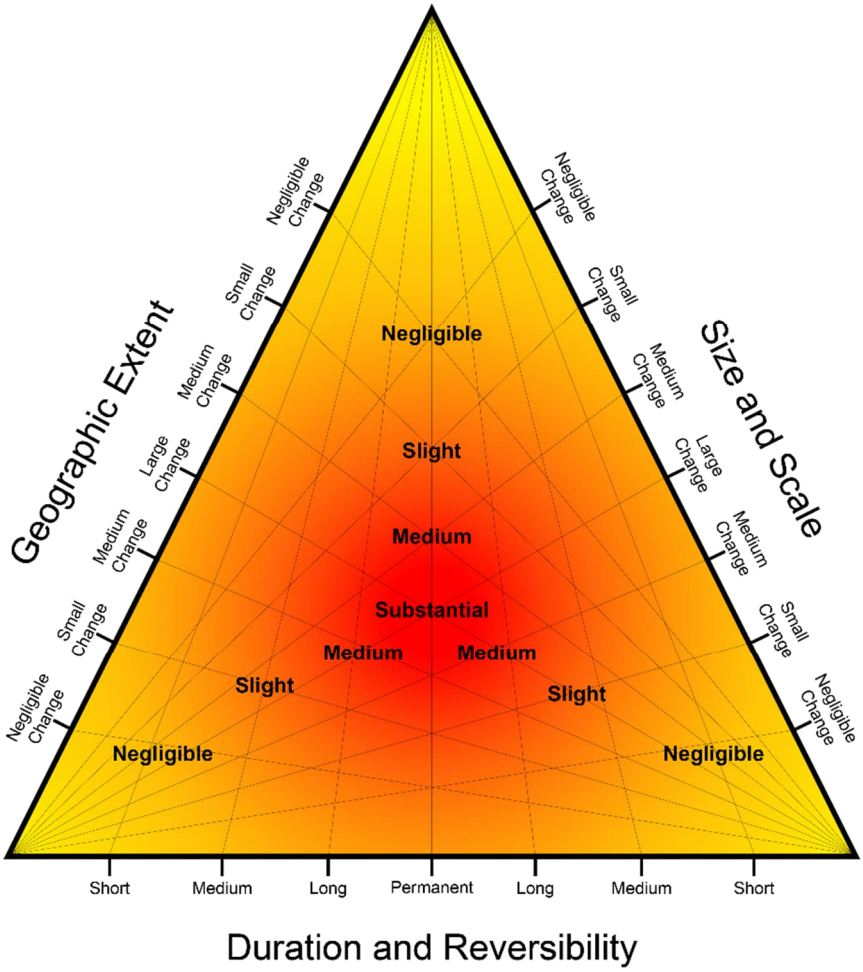
Table 13-A-13: Magnitude of Visual Change – Duration and Reversibility

Category	Description
Permanent/ Irreversible	Effects that will last for over 60 years and are deemed irreversible.
Long-term reversible	Effects that will last between 15 and 60 years and are theoretically reversible.
Medium-term reversible	Effects that will last between 7 and 15 years and are theoretically reversible.
Temporary/ Short-term reversible	Effects that will last from 0 to 7 years – likely to include construction effects.

Deciding on Overall Magnitude of Visual Change

The relationships between the three factors that contribute to assessment of the magnitude of visual effects are illustrated graphically, as a guide, in **Figure 13-A-5** below. Various combinations are possible, and the overall magnitude of each effect is judged on merit rather than by formulaic application of the relationships in the figure.

Figure 13-A-5: Determining the Magnitude of Visual Change



Assessment of Visual Effects

The assessment of visual effects is defined in terms of the relationship between the sensitivity of the visual receptors (value and susceptibility) and the magnitude of the change. The diagram below (**Figure 13A-6**) summarises the nature of the relationship but it is not formulaic and only indicates broad levels of effect. Judgements are made about each visual effect using this diagram as a guide.

Major and Major/Moderate effects are regarded as important planning considerations in landscape and visual appraisals (or significant effects in landscape and visual impact assessments). Moderate effects are not generally considered to be important planning considerations/significant effects, although the assessor may conclude that some moderate effects could constitute significant effects in certain circumstances: for example, there may be a concentration of several moderate effects in one location, or a moderate effect may occur for a particularly sensitive receptor or be of a particularly high magnitude.

Figure 13-A-6: Assessment of Visual Effects