

10 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

10.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR addresses the potential landscape and visual impacts of a proposed residential development in Oranmore, Co. Galway. The emphasis in this chapter is on the *likely significant effects* of the proposal. It covers the assessment methodology, a description of the proposed development and the existing landscape as well as landscape policy and relevant guidance. It includes a description of Galway County Council’s landscape policy and the area in which the proposed development site is located.

The landscape of the area is described in terms of its existing character, which includes a description of the landscape value and the landscape’s sensitivity to change. The landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed residential development includes the use of representative viewpoints as well as an assessment of landscape value and landscape sensitivity. The potential impacts in both landscape and visual terms are then assessed, including cumulative impact.

10.1.1 Statement of Authority

This section of the EIAR has been prepared by Órla Murphy and Joanna Mole both of MKO. Órla is an Environmental Scientist and has experience drafting landscape assessments and LVIA for EIARs; both relating to residential and recreational developments.

Joanna is a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 15 years’ experience, predominately in private practice, in the UK, Germany, Ireland and most recently in Israel. Joanna holds a BSc (Hons) in Landscape Design & Plant Science from Sheffield University, a Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University and a MSc in Renewable Energy Systems Technology from Loughborough University.

Joanna has been a Chartered Member of the British Landscape Institute since 1998 after successfully passing her Professional Practice Examination.

10.1.2 Do-Nothing’ Scenario Impact Assessment

In the ‘Do Nothing’ scenario, the proposed development would not take place. The site would continue to exist as a green field site which had previous use for agriculture.

10.1.3 Proposed Development Description

The subject site is located in the townlands of Moneyduff and Oranhill, County Galway, approximately 590m south east of the town core of Oranmore. The proposed development site, which has an area of circa 8.7 ha, is a field previously used for agriculture, with evidence of previous site clearance and levelling visible. Access to the site will be gained from the existing roundabout constructed on the N67 road as well as from a new road to be constructed, which will connect to Coill Clocha and Oranhill Drive, to the north and south of the site, respectively.

The proposed residential development is described in Chapter 3 and will generally consist of the following:

- 1) Construction of 212 no. residential units comprising:
 - 34 no. House Type A (four-bed semi-detached unit)
 - 54 no. House Type B (three-bed semi-detached unit)
 - 16 no. House Type C (four-bed detached)
 - 16 no. House Type D (three-bed terraced unit)
 - 24 no. House Type E (three-bed semi-detached unit with attic conversion)
 - 50 no. House Type G (25 no. two-bed ground floor duplexes and 25 no. two-bed plus study first/second floor duplexes)
 - 6 no. House Type H (two-bed duplex apartments)
 - 12 no. house Type J (two-bed terrace)
- 2) Development of a crèche facility (374 sqm) and associated outdoor play areas and car parking.
- 3) Provision of new vehicular and pedestrian site access from the North-South Oranmore Distributor Road (the route of which was permitted under An Bord Pleanála Reference PL 07.237219, which was extended under Pl Ref 15/1334).
- 4) Provision of shared communal and private open space, site landscaping, car parking, site services and all associated site development works.

The proposed development is intended to allow for the development of housing in the area of Oranmore; which currently has a significant shortage of housing and where there is an increased demand for it.

10.1.4 Scoping Replies/Pre-Planning Meetings

A scoping and consultation exercise has been carried out by McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan Ltd., as detailed in Chapter 2 of this EIAR. Copies of all scoping responses are presented in Appendix 2-1 of this EIAR.

10.2 Methodology and Assessment Criteria

This section broadly outlines the methodology used to undertake the landscape and visual assessment of the proposed development, and the guidance used in the preparation of each section. There are four main sections to the assessment:

- Outline of guidance followed
- Baseline landscape and visual assessment
- Nature and visibility of the proposed development
- Assessment of potential impacts

10.2.1 Guidance Documents

In 2000, the Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoEHLG) published *‘Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities’*, which recommended that all local authorities adopt a standardised approach to landscape assessment for incorporation into development plans and consideration as part of the planning process. This document remains in Draft.

In 2002, Ireland signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention (ELC). This introduced a pan-European concept that centres on the quality of landscape protection, management and planning. The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published a National Landscape Strategy for Ireland in 2015. The strategy aims to

ensure compliance with the ELC and contains six main objectives, including undertaking a National Landscape Character Assessment and developing landscape policies.

Although the DoEHLG 2000 guidance remains in draft form, this section of the LVIA has been informed by the landscape assessment guidelines presented in the DoEHLG document as well as a range of other guidelines, which include:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, UK, 2013).
- *'Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment'; Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/2011* (2011);
- *EPA Guidelines on the information to be contained on Environmental Impact Statements (EPA 2002)*
- *EPA Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EPA, 2003)*.
- *Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports'* (EPA, August 2017),

Consideration is also given to the Draft EPA guidance documents.

10.2.2 Baseline Landscape and Visual Information

As part of this assessment, an initial desk study was undertaken which identified relevant policies and guidelines, both at national and local level. This includes policies on landscape and landscape character, designated landscapes, and protected views. The site and study area are described in terms of landscape character types as identified in *'Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* (DoELHG, 2000), while the surrounding landscape within 2km kilometres of the site is described with reference to landscape character as well as other landscape designations contained in the Galway County Council Development Plan 2015 – 2021 and as identified in the DoEHLG 2000 guidelines. In addition, field visits were undertaken to assess the landscape character and elements both on the site itself, and in the wider landscape.

10.2.3 Scope and Definition of Landscape and Visual Impact (LVIA) Study Area

For the purposes of this EIAR, where the 'proposed development site' or 'the site' is referred to in the LVIA, this relates to the primary study area for the proposed development, as delineated in red on the EIAR figures (maps). This total area measures approximately circa 8.7 hectares. The proposed housing development site is discussed in some detail in terms of its landscape character.

However, the landscape and visual baseline mapping and viewpoint selection are based on a wider study area, consisting of all the area within 2 km from the development site boundary. This area for which the baseline maps and viewpoint locations are produced and is referred to as the Landscape and Visual Impacts (LVIA) Study Area or 'study area'.

10.2.4 Assessing Landscape Effects

Landscape Effects: This can be described as changes which affect the landscape as a resource. This includes how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects and its landscape character. Landscape effects also relate to changes in the structure of the landscape. Under the GLVIA (2013), the assessment of likely significant effects on landscape receptors

includes a judgement on both the sensitivity of the receptor as well as the magnitude of change.

Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity, which is described in the GLVIA (2013) as a combination of the landscape’s susceptibility to change as well as the value attached to the landscape, as shown in Table 10.1 below. Susceptibility to change can be described as the ability of the landscape receptor (either the overall character or quality of the landscape, or a particular landscape feature), to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline (existing) landscape situation, and/or the achievements of landscape planning policies and strategies. Landscape value is a combination of the values listed in Table 10.1 below as well as any other characteristics which indicate landscape value and summarized in Section 1.6.2.

Magnitude of the change

The magnitude of change within a landscape, as outlined in Table 10.2 below, is a combination of the size and scale of the change, the extent of the area affected (e.g. how much of a feature is lost or the extent of the feature to be added) and the degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects are altered. The duration and reversibility of the effect. Significance is then arrived at by combining the magnitude and sensitivity judgements.

Table 10.1 Assessing Landscape Sensitivity

Susceptibility of landscape to change	Description and example criteria
High	Landscapes where the overall landscape character or condition is highly susceptible to change and where the landscape receptor has a low ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the landscape character and in compliance with planning policies/strategies.
Medium	Landscapes where the overall landscape character has a moderate ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the landscape character and in compliance with planning policies/strategies.
Low	Landscapes where the overall landscape character has a strong ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to the maintenance of the landscape character and in compliance with planning policies/strategies.
Value attached to Landscape elements	Description and example criteria
High	Landscapes deemed as high value or forming part of designations (e.g. areas of amenity, scenic routes/views) in the development plan, at a national or international level.
Medium	Landscapes where value is not formally designated, but are of value as good examples of high quality, intact landscapes and are areas deemed to be of relatively high scenic quality. Landscapes that contain some rare elements, include areas which are wild or have a sense of naturalness, strong cultural associations or which have recreational value.
Low	Landscapes that are not formally designated and considered as modified. Areas which do not have particularly scenic qualities, do not include rare elements or landscape features and do not have strongly evident cultural or heritage associations.

Table 10.2 Assessing Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Magnitude of Change	Description
High	Major loss or alteration of key landscape elements with an effect on the overall landscape character, resulting in a high degree of change to the aesthetics of the landscape. Changes will be evident over a wide geographical area.
Medium	Some loss or alteration of landscape elements resulting in some change to landscape character and aesthetics. This includes landscapes where there is a moderate effect on the overall landscape character but does not affect key characteristics.
Low	Minor loss of or change to landscape elements. These changes do not affect the overall landscape character or key elements. Changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes are low and limited in their geographical extent.

10.2.5 Assessing Visual Effects

10.2.5.1 Viewpoint Selection

A step by step process was followed in selecting appropriate photomontage locations. The first step was to select a number of representative locations following a detailed desk top study of mapping. These locations were based on the following criteria:

- Potential visibility of the development site
- Critical landscape designations e.g. views and prospects, scenic routes, areas classed as sensitive
- Close to settlements or groups of residential dwellings
- Within public areas or on public roads, particularly more trafficked routes
- Views that cover a wide area in terms of geographical location, elevation and varying distance from site.

Finally, following a site visit, to assess visibility on the ground, a total of 6 no. photomontage locations were agreed upon. The locations provide a representative range of local views.

10.2.5.2 Visual Receptors - Assessing Magnitude and Sensitivity

Visual Receptor Sensitivity, listed in Table 10.3 below, depends on the occupation or activity of the people as well the extent to which the attention is focused on views and visual amenity, according to the GLVIA Guidelines (2013). It is also based on the value attached to the view. Table 10.4 below outlines the magnitude of visual effects, consisting of size and scale of the change, the extent of the area affected and the duration or reversibility of the effect.

Table 10.3 Assessing Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Susceptibility of visual receptor	Description and example criteria
High	These include viewers at designated views or landscapes; viewers such as residents which are focussed to a large extent on the development due to location in close proximity; viewers at well-known heritage or popular tourist or recreational areas, viewers along scenic or tourist routes
Medium	Visual receptors who may have some susceptibility to changes in view, such as those from views which are not designated, but may have local significance or those travelling along routes or at views which are considered moderately scenic.

Low	Viewers engaged in activities where the focus is not on the landscape or view, such as those travelling along busy routes, viewers at work or engaged in sport not related to views or experience of the landscape.
Value attached to the view	Description and example criteria
High	Protected views or views from designated landscapes of national or international importance, views indicated on tourist/cultural publications or considered of high scenic quality, naturalness, tranquillity or views with rare elements.
Medium	Non-designated views, but including panoramic views or views judged to be of some scenic quality, demonstrating some sense of naturalness, tranquillity or have some rare element in the view.
Low	Views which are not designated and are not judged to be panoramic views or of particular scenic quality as described above. These are views which have no distinctive features.

Table 10.4 Assessing Magnitude of Visual Effects

Magnitude of Change	Description
High	Viewpoints where the proposed development results in a significant change of the view and its composition and creates a high degree of contrast to the existing. This includes viewpoints where the proposed development is fully or almost fully visible over a wide area at close proximity to the viewer. The effects are long term or permanent and have a low level of reversibility.
Medium	Viewpoints where the proposed development results in moderate changes to the view and a moderate degree of contrast with the existing view. This includes viewpoints where the development is visible over a significant proportion of the view and viewpoints, which are not in close proximity to the development.
Low	Viewpoints where the proposed development results in a low level of change in the view and its composition with a low degree of contrast. Viewpoints where the development is partially or barely visible in a small proportion of the view and includes viewpoints at a distance from the proposed development.

10.2.6 Viewpoint Assessment

Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, showing the standard definitions as outlined in EPA guidelines, has been adapted for the determination of effects, as shown in Table 10.5 below, in this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Chapter. Values will be ascribed visual effects in viewpoints arising from the proposed development in terms of quality, significance and duration in line with the EPA guidance, while extent, probability and type will form part of the viewpoint descriptions.

Table 10.5 Impact Classification Terminology (EPA, 2017)

Impact Characteristic	Term	Description
Quality	Positive	A change which improves the quality of the environment.
	Neutral	No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
	Negative	A change which reduces the quality of the environment.
Significance	Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
	Not Significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
	Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
	Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging trends.
	Significant	An effect, which by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
	Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
	Profound	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.
Duration and Frequency	Momentary Effects	Effects lasting from seconds to minutes.
	Brief Effects	Effects lasting less than a day.
	Temporary Effects	Effects lasting less than a year.
	Short-term	Effects lasting one to seven years.
	Medium-term	Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.
	Long-term	Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.
	Permanent	Effects lasting over sixty years.
	Reversible Effects	Effects that can be undone.
	Frequency	Describe how often the effect will occur. (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually)
	Irreversible	When the character, distinctiveness, diversity, or reproductive capacity of an environment is permanently lost.
	Residual	Degree of environmental change that will occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect.
	Synergistic	Where the resultant effect is of greater significance than the sum of its constituents.
'Worst Case'	The effects arising from a development in the case where mitigation measures substantially fail.	

10.2.6.1 Scope and Definition of Landscape and Visual Impact (LVIA) Study Area

For the purposes of this EIAR, where the ‘proposed development site’ or ‘the site’ is referred to in the LVIA, this relates to the primary study area for the proposed development, as delineated in red on the EIAR figures (maps). This total area measures approximately 8.642 hectares. The proposed residential development site is discussed in some detail in terms of its landscape character.

However, the landscape and visual baseline mapping and viewpoint selection are based on a wider study area, consisting of all the area within 2 km from the development site boundary. This area for which the baseline maps and viewpoint locations are produced and is referred to as the Landscape and Visual Impacts (LVIA) Study Area or ‘study area’.

10.3 Landscape Baseline: Landscape Policy Context

10.3.1 Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021

10.3.1.1 Landscape Policies and Objectives

The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (CDP) sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the administrative area of Galway County Council.

Policy LCM1 Preservation of Landscape Character

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

Objective LCM 1 Landscape Sensitivity Classification

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the Landscape Sensitivity Classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals.

This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the Plan.

Objective LCM 2 Landscape Sensitivity Ratings

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

Objective LCM 3 Open/Unfenced Landscape

Preserve the status of traditionally open/unfenced landscape. The merits of each case will be considered in light of landscape Sensitivity Ratings and views of amenity importance.

Objective FPV 1 Development Management

Preserve the focal points and views as listed in Map FPV1 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said focal points and views.

Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 also includes policies and objectives in regard to urban areas. Those relating to landscape are as follows:

Objective UHO 7 – High Quality/Mix and Sensitive Design

Ensure that new developments are responsive to their site context and in keeping with the character, amenity, heritage, environment and landscape of the area. New development proposals will be required to complement the existing character of the town centre/area in terms of scale, height, massing, building line, housing mix, urban grain and definition and through high quality design and layout proposals for buildings and structures.

Objective UHO 8 – Urban Design

Promote the use of sustainable urban design principles and approaches that will help to create high quality built and natural environments appropriate to the context and landscape setting of the specific area, having regard to the guidance contained in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines 2009, the accompanying Urban Design Manual 2009 (or any updated version) and the Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (2013) (including any superseding document).

10.3.1.2 Development Management Standards

The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 contains Development Management Standards for various types of development. The following is stated in relation to guidelines for residential development in both urban and rural areas:

f) Context Sensitive

New developments should take full account of the characteristics of the natural and built environment of the site, the views and vistas to and from the site, and the surrounding areas.

d) Permeability

Convenient access needs to be provided between and within areas, particularly to larger community and commercial facilities and to places of work. Routes within the area should be accessible for everyone and as direct as possible, and for this reason “gated estates” should be discouraged. The design process should consider what levels of permeability are appropriate for different street users, with permeability for pedestrians and cyclists taking precedence over permeability for vehicles. River or canal paths for walkers and cyclists can provide attractive connections within and between areas. In the interests of security, it is necessary that all pedestrian and cycle links be designed in such a way so as to be overlooked.

e) Natural Features

The layout of the development should be designed around the retention of existing natural features. This would include any existing trees, hedgerows, watercourses and landform features, amongst others.

f) Landscaping

A high standard of landscaping is an essential part of high quality new developments. Plans for landscaping, including hard and soft landscaping, should be submitted at planning application stage. In general, indigenous planting suitable to the local site and soil conditions should be used.

10.3.1.3 Landscape Character Assessment

The *Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway*, published by Galway County Council in 2002, and adopted into the current CDP, divides the county into 25 distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The subject site is located within LCA 13 - East Galway Bay (Oranmore to Kinvarra Bay and inland to N18 road). Figure 10.1 shows these LCAs in relation to the proposed development site. The relevant section of the Landscape Character Assessment describes the East Galway Bay LCA as follows:

“The coastline is intimate and sinuous with many sheltered inlets. The coast is scenic and relatively undeveloped. The landscape adjacent to the coast comprises pastureland in large fields bordered by mature hedgerows. The existing vegetation screens the coastline from roads and properties inland of the N18 road.”

Approximately 0.85 kilometres to the east of the site boundary lies LCA 4 Southeast Galway (Clarinbridge to Gort), which is described as an undulating scrubby grassland, bound by field hedgerows without mature trees. This landscape is scenic without being remarkable and boasts long distance views of the Slieve Aughty Mountains further east.

Recommendations are made in The Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway. Recommendation 3.8 for LCA 13 is listed below:

3.36 The sinuous coastline is scenic and is relatively undeveloped. It is therefore highly sensitive. Future development should therefore be located further inland in order to protect this coastline and the panoramic views to be gained from it.

3.37 In general, groups of dwellings or holiday homes should be located further inland within the area indicated as class 3 on the landscape sensitivity map. These developments are to be located close to existing settlements. As in other areas, advantage is to be taken of both landform and existing vegetation to carefully conceal these developments from view.

As part of the landscape assessment landscape values of outstanding, high, medium and low were assigned to different areas of County Galway as shown on Map LCM1 of the CDP. These in turn were based on cultural, socio-economic and environmental landscape values. The site itself is in an area of high landscape value as seen on Figure 10.2 and is within 700m of a large area designed as low landscape value.

10.3.1.4 Landscape Sensitivity Rating

The sensitivity of a landscape to development and therefore to change varies according to its character and to the importance which is attached to any combination of landscape values. The Landscape Sensitivity and Character Areas Map (LCM2) included in the current CDP classifies the sensitivity of landscape areas according to the following classification:

- Class 1 – Low
- Class 2 – Moderate
- Class 3 – Medium
- Class 4 – Special
- Class 5 – Unique

The landscape sensitivity of the study area is designated as Class 3-Medium with a coastal edge of Class 4-Special in the *Landscape Sensitivity and Character Areas Map (LCM2)* in the CDP as shown in Figure 10.3.

10.3.1.5 Focal Points and Views

The Galway County Council Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment lists 122 focal points and views within the county in Map FPV1 of the development plan. Map FPV1 does not specify in detail the exact locations of the views or their focus and is of a general nature. Descriptions accompanying the views/focal points are also general.

There are no designated focal points or views pertaining to the subject site within a 5km radius of the site. The nearest viewpoint to the proposed development site is listed as View No. 34, *Reservoir located north of the R339 northeast of Galway* on Map FPV1 - *Focal Points/Views* of the CDP. This view lies approximately 5.1 kilometres east of the site in the townland of Carnmore West. The proposed development site will not be visible from this location due to intervening screening by landform, vegetation and buildings.

View No.35 is approximately 7.4 kilometres further north of the site and is listed as *'Church and cemetery ruins at Baile Chlair'*. The development site is neither visible from this location nor is the view directed towards the site.

10.3.1.6 Walking Routes, Cycleways and Tourism trails

Objective RA6 in the Development Plan notes the following:

Prohibit the intrusion of development along public walking routes and public rights of way, particularly those in scenic areas, the sea coast and along inland waterways.

The following trails and cycleways are the closest to the site:

Oranmore Slí

This Oranmore Slí is a circular Sli Na Slainte (path to health) walking route 4.8 kilometres long, south west of the centre of Oranmore. It travels along the Maree Road, approximately 280 metres east of the development site and there will be some visibility of the proposed residential development anticipated from this part of the trail.

Mervue Slí

The Mervue Slí is a Sli Na Slainte (path to health) walking route 2.6 kilometre trail starting at the entrance to the Mervue Business Park, following a circuit route around the adjoining roads. It is approximately 7.2 kilometres at its nearest point to the development site and there is no visibility of the proposed development anticipated from any part of this trail.

Wild Atlantic Way

The parts of the Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) falling within the study area follow the Limerick Rd to the north and then the N67 southwards to the east of the site. There is also another branch of the WAW way running along Maree Rd west of the site. The closest section of the WAW is on the N67 at a distance of approx. 0.2 km from the site boundary and is shown on Figure 10.3. Visibility of the proposed development is anticipated in will be further investigated and discussed in Sections 106 and 10.7.

10.4 Landscape Baseline: Landscape Character

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

10.4.1 Site of the Proposed Development

The site of the proposed development is within a green field previously used for agricultural. There is evidence of previous site clearance and levelling apparent. The surrounding area is residential in nature immediately to the north and south of the proposed development site, while lands adjoining the site to the east and west are green field sites. Section 10.4.2 describes the landscape character of the site and surrounding landscape in further detail.

10.4.2 Physical Landscape

The topography, vegetation and anthropological features on the land surface in an area combine to set limits on the amount of the landscape that can be seen at any one time. These physical restrictions form individual areas or units, known as physical units, whose character can be defined by aspect, slope, scale and size. A physical unit is generally delineated by topographical boundaries and is defined by landform and landcover.

10.4.2.1 Landform

Present-day landscapes owe their form to the geological materials from which they were carved. Landform is the term used to describe the spatial and formal arrangement of landscape components as a natural product of geological and geomorphologic processes in the past, and refers primarily to topography and drainage.

10.4.2.1.1 Topography

The local topography of the study area is predominantly flat with some slight local variation to the west of the site and sloping from the centre of the site to the west periphery.

The lands of the study area and to the west of the site have a slightly lower lying topography than what is apparent on lands to the east of the site. These surrounding lands to the east, along the western extent of the N67 have elevations as high as 11m AOD, in comparison to the subject site where elevations vary between 3 and 10m AOD. The topography of the proposed site is also visible from the surrounding landscape.

10.4.2.1.2 Drainage

The Millplot Stream flows westwards from the land to the west of the proposed site, discharging into Oranmore Bay ~295m downstream. This field is influenced by the Millplot Stream and artificial drainage channels that cross the site. The Millplot Stream and site all drain to a single culvert under the road on the site's western boundary. Further information relating to drainage can be found in Section 7.3.4 of Chapter 7.

Watercourses in the immediate area of the subject site include the Rockhill (Galway_010) River; in which a small section of this waterbody crosses the L4101 Maree Road into Oranmore Bay and is approximately 300m west of the proposed development site

in an adjacent field. The larger extent of the Rockhill River, approximately 650 south of the proposed development site, receives inputs from Dunbulcan Bay.

Further north of the site, the Carrowmoneash (Oranmore_010) River is positioned approximately 550m north of the proposed development site and flows west into Oranmore Bay.

Further information regarding site drainage can be found in Section 7.3 of Chapter 7.

10.4.2.2 Landcover

Landcover is the term used to describe the combinations of vegetation and land-use that cover the land surface. It comprises the more detailed constituent parts of the landscape and encompasses both natural and man-made features.

The proposed development site occupies the entirety of the site. On the day of the site visit several photographs were taken around the site to show its vegetation. There are multiple residential dwellings in the vicinity.



Plate 10.1 View from the proposed site entrance off the N67 showing entrance with a track and rough grassland

The proposed site entrance is off the N67 to the east of Oranmore and is partially screened from the approach road on both sides, as shown in Plate 10.1 above. The site was generally dominated by rough grassland, with some evidence hedgerows. A rough access track is visible from this location.



Plate 10.2 View to the southwest of the site showing rough grassland, scrub and hedgerows with some scattered trees

Plate 10.2 shows the view to the southwest of the site from the west. The site here sits lower than the local road, allowing an elevated view of the site. The site was generally dominated by rough grassland, with evidence of scrub and bare ground in places. Hedgerows line the boundaries of the site and are also evident in patches throughout the site. Some single standing trees were also seen while on site.



Plate 10.3: View towards the south west of the site showing overburden on site.



Plate 10.4: View towards the east of the site showing overburden on site.

As seen in Plate 10.3 and Plate 10.4 above, overburden onsite has revegetated naturally with grasses.

10.4.2.3 Land Use

The site is not in active use and represents a green field, which was previously used for agriculture. Historic site clearance and levelling is apparent. Land-use in the wider landscape is a combination of medium-density residential development and green field sites, where residential developments are visible in all directions from the surrounding site.

10.5 Indications of Landscape Value

10.5.1 Landscape Value

To determine the landscape sensitivity, and ultimately the likely significance of the effects, assessments of landscape value for the proposed development site and wider (LVIA) study area were assessed. Landscape value includes designations such as scenic views and sensitivity designations found in development plans, as well as values which are attached to undesignated landscapes. A number of criteria were developed to assess the landscape values of the study area. These, combined with susceptibility, contribute to the assessment of landscape sensitivity. See Table 10.6 below.

Table 10.6 Features of Landscape Value

Feature	Description
Landscape Designations	The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 assigns the development site a high landscape value and medium landscape sensitivity. The area approximately 700m east is assigned a low landscape value. There are two designated views within 5.1 and 7.4 kilometres of the site. The development site is neither visible from these locations nor are the views directed towards the site.

Feature	Description
Landscape Quality/Condition	The quality of the landscape in this area can be described as modified, with few features not having been affected by some anthropogenic influence, in particular agriculture. Overall, the level of built development that has taken place within the wider landscape is significant, with multiple clusters of housing located in the surrounding lands particularly directly south and north of the site.
Aesthetic Qualities	Topography and site vegetation do not represent any particular aesthetic qualities or interest. There are some short and medium distance views into site, with topography and vegetation reducing any further views. Within the site, there are long distance views westward towards the coast, which have aesthetic value.
Wildness/naturalness	The existing development site itself shows the site to have been modified by the interaction of man with the natural environment. The lands have been modified for agriculture as well as apparent historic site clearance and levelling. In the context of the wider landscape, most of the surrounding area has been modified to accommodate for residential development, with some areas of agriculture still evident.
Rarity/Conservation Interests	The proposed development site is immediately adjacent to the Galway Bay Complex SAC and pNHA. The Inner Galway Bay SPA is 0.08km west of the site. Cregganna Marsh NHA is 0.26km south of the subject site. See Chapter 5 Flora and Fauna.
Cultural Meaning/Associations	The cultural heritage of Oranmore and the subject site is detailed in Section 11 of this EIAR. A sense of cultural meaning arises where a site or features within a site are deemed to explain, represent or inspire cultural values. There is one recorded monument located within the site boundary, along the southern edge of the site. For more details see Chapter 11.
Recreation Value	The site itself is in private ownership and has no recreational or amenity value. The Oranmore Slí walking route is 4.8 kilometres long which travels along the Maree Road, approximately 280 metres east of the development site and there will be some visibility of the proposed residential development anticipated from this part of the trail. The closest section of the WAW is on the N67 at a distance of approx. 0.2 km from the site boundary. Visibility of the proposed development is anticipated.

10.6 Visibility of the Proposed Development

Following the desktop study, a site visit was carried out to assess the visibility of the site from the surrounding area as well as the views available from the site. This informs the visual baseline study, indicates the areas which have potential visibility and facilitates the choice of viewpoint locations.

10.6.1 Views from the Site



Plate 10.5: Views westwards towards the coast from the centre of the site.

Views from the site are generally restricted. The exception being some open long-distance views westwards across an adjacent agricultural field towards Galway Bay taken from a slightly elevated area on site, as seen in Plate 10.5 above.



Plate 10.6: View of the southern extent of the site showing surrounding residential development

The landform when viewed towards the northeast, north and south provides intermittent views of housing in the surrounding area. Plate 10.6 above shows a short to medium-distance view from within the site to the south, of an apartment block,

which makes up part of a residential development. This apartment block is approximately 50 metres south of the proposed development site boundary.



Plate 10.7: View towards the northern extent of the site showing surrounding residential development

Plate 10.7 above represents a northern view from an elevated area within the site, which shows a view of the adjacent residential development.

10.6.2 Views towards the Site



Plate 10.8 – View from the N67 towards the south of the proposed residential site (located to the rear of the hedgerow shown in the middle ground), where topography reduces the visibility to the site.



Plate 10.9 – View from the N67 towards the south-east of the proposed residential site

Plate 10.8 and 10.9 show that from the eastern extent along the N67, views to the south-east, east, south-west and north-east of the site are impeded by vegetation and the topography of the surrounding landscape. The proposed development is not located immediately adjacent the N67 but to the rear of the hedgerows shown in the Plates.



Plate 10.10 – Views looking towards the west, south-west of the proposed residential site, where the lower elevation of the site allows for more open views.

Plate 10.10 shows views from the Orancourt Road, on the western periphery of the site looking towards the west, south-west of the proposed residential development. As the road is at a slightly higher elevation than the site, more open views are available.



Plate 10.11 – Views looking towards the western edge of the proposed residential development

Plate 10.11 above shows an image taken along the L4101, Maree Road, looking towards the western extent of the site. These open medium-distance views towards the site are partially screened by a long strip of trees and hedgerows running along the boundary of the site.



Plate 10.12 View from the proposed site entrance off the N67 showing entrance with a track and rough grassland

A partial view of the proposed residential site is available, from a short section of the N67 at the site entrance but is intermittently screened as illustrated on Plate 10.12.

Several viewpoints, marked on Figure 10.4, show the photo locations chosen for the landscape and visual impact assessment and are described and presented below. For each viewpoint, the extent of the proposed residential development within the image is indicated by the orange bracket.

10.6.3 Viewpoint Locations

A total of 7 viewpoint locations were selected. They are briefly described in Table 10.7 below and shown in Figure 10.4. Views and visibility from these locations are described and assessed in greater depth in Section 10.8.1.1. It is important to note that these are tools to assist the visual assessment.

It is not possible to present every view and every location by means of viewpoints. The choice of viewpoint locations is influenced by both the views available and the type of viewer. These include viewpoint locations from or close to local settlements, such as VPs 1, 2 and 5 as well as locations on regional and local roads at varying distances from the site. Care was taken to provide a range of views from various elevations, distances and orientations.

The choice of viewpoint locations should cover locations where the development will be completely visible as well as partially visible. Views are taken from different landscape character areas around the site. All views are taken within 2 kilometres of the site, where visual effects are likely to be greatest.

Table 10.7 Viewpoint Locations

No.	Description	Grid Reference
1	View from the Orancourt Road at the junction where the road splits up towards Oranhill Avenue and Creg View. It lies 143 metres southwest of the development site boundary in the townland of Oranhill.	E 138093 N 223313
2	View from the corner of Oranhill Road as it joins with Oranhill Drive in the townland of Oranhill, 35 metres south of the development site boundary.	E 138396 N 223427
3	View from the Orancourt local road in the townland of Oranhill, adjacent to the development site boundary.	E 138045 N 223441
4	View from the L4101 Maree local road in the townland of Oranmore, 360 metres west of the development site boundary.	E 137773 N 223610
5	View from an adjacent residential development local access road in the townland of Oranhill, adjacent to the development site boundary. Photos were taken above a high wall, which screens the full view from residents.	E 138322 N 223875
6	View from the N67 roundabout junction in the townland of Oranhill approximately 175 metres east of the development site boundary.	E 138510 N 223764
7	View from the N67 road in the townland of Oranhill approximately 258 metres east of the development site boundary.	E 138646 N 223597

10.7 Likely and Significant Effects and Associated Mitigation Measures

The section below discusses the potential significant effects. It should be noted that, as per the EPA guidelines, referred to in Section 10.2.1 above, effects (or Impacts as they are referred to in the guidance) are described with reference to quality, significance and duration.

Where mitigation measures are proposed, a residual effect is then included.

10.7.1 Viewpoints

Tables 10.8 to 10.14 below present the overall assessment of visual effects based on 7 viewpoints. Where possible, viewpoints were taken where there was no vegetation within the immediate view so as to show the most open view possible. Each table includes the viewpoint name and details as well as an image showing the predicted extent of the proposed residential development, descriptions of the views and prediction of the visual effects of each phase. These in turn lead to an assessment of the visual receptor sensitivity and magnitude of change. All are then combined to come to a final assessment of effects for each viewpoint.

Whether a visual effect is deemed to be positive, negative or neutral involves a degree of subjectivity. What appears to be a positive effect to one viewer could be deemed to be a negative effect by another viewer. All predicted visual effects of viewpoints 1-7 below are long term and direct effects.

10.7.1.1 Viewpoint Description and Visual Impact Assessment

Table 10.8 Viewpoint 1


							
Viewpoint 1 Orancourt Road	Approximate Distance from site boundary: 143 metres Grid Reference E 138093 N 223313						
Viewpoint Description:	View from the Orancourt Road at the junction where the road splits up towards Oranhill Avenue and Creg View. It lies 143 metres southwest of the development site boundary in the townland of Oranhill. The road junction has grassed verges, a footpath, vegetation and fencing, screening some of the view. In the foreground, deciduous trees have been planted within the grass verge along the footpath. In the middle ground, scrub and some trees interspersed by grass are visible in front of a hedgerow and with trees which forms the southern site boundary. To the left of the image house gables can just be made out in the distance in gaps in the vegetation.						
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	Construction work during Phase 3 and 4 is likely to be visible from this viewpoint. Removal of the boundary vegetation and raising the skyline with buildings will change the nature of the view and introduce more man-made structures into the landscape. Although screening by land north of the Orancourt Road, which have been granted planning permission for a different housing development, will reduce the visual effects						
Mitigation Measures & Factors	A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects						
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	The visual receptors are motorists and walkers travelling on Orancourt Road as well as some nearby residences. Hence, visual receptor sensitivity is considered Low to Medium.						
Magnitude of Change	The vegetation and fencing in the vicinity of the development within this view mean the magnitude of the change is considered Medium.						
Significance of Effect	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Quality:</td> <td>Negative</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Significance:</td> <td>Slight</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Duration:</td> <td>Permanent</td> </tr> </table>	Quality:	Negative	Significance:	Slight	Duration:	Permanent
Quality:	Negative						
Significance:	Slight						
Duration:	Permanent						

Table 10.9 Viewpoint 2


	
Viewpoint 2 Oranhill Road	Approximate Distance from site boundary: 35 metres Grid Reference E 138396 N 223427
View Description:	<p>View from the corner of Oranhill Road as it joins with Oranhill Drive in the townland of Oranhill, 35 metres south of the development site boundary. In the foreground is the Oranhill Road with grass verges, a footpath and fencing. Beyond the fence scrub and grass can be seen leading up to the hedgerows and trees that mark the south-eastern site boundary. The topography beyond the fence is elevated, which along with the vegetation partially blocks the view to the proposed site. To the left of the image there is a medium-distance views to housing on Orancourt Road through gaps in the vegetation. The character of the view is a mixture of urban and rural.</p>
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	<p>The topography and vegetation visible in the foreground of the site will not be affected by the proposed development either during the construction or operational phase. Construction work will be visible from this viewpoint albeit partially screened by the topography and vegetation on adjacent land. Construction of the proposed site will take place in four phases, helping to reduce the impact on the landscape.</p> <p>Existing boundary vegetation is not earmarked for retention in this part of the proposed development. Hence parts of the vegetation will be removed. It is anticipated that upper levels of the nearer houses will be visible, which will lead to the skyline being raised and medium distance views being blocked. The nature of the view will become more urban/suburban as a result of the development.</p>
Mitigation Measures & Factors	<p>A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects</p>
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	<p>The visual receptors are motorists and walkers travelling on Oranhill Road as well as some nearby residences. Hence, visual receptor sensitivity is considered Low to Medium</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>Removal of vegetation, raising of the skyline, loss of view and a change in the character of the view, therefore, the magnitude of the change is considered Medium to High</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Quality: Neutral Significance: Imperceptible Duration: Permanent</p>

Table 10.10 Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 3 Orancourt Road West	Approximate Distance from site boundary: adjacent to site Grid Reference E 138045 N 223441
View Description:	<p>View from the Orancourt local road in the townland of Oranhill, adjacent to the development site boundary. Orancourt local road including an on-road cycle path and an adjacent timber crash barrier can be seen in the foreground of this view. A single tree and intermittent ornamental hedging can be seen behind the crash barrier. A deciduous area of woodland is visible to the left. A medium-distance view is evident until reaching the strip of trees and grass hedgerows, where topography of the site increases. Apart from the timber crash barrier there are no other man-made structures visible and the view is rural in nature.</p>
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	<p>During the construction phase, works on the site will be visible from this viewpoint. Construction of the proposed site will take place in four phases, helping to reduce the impact on the landscape. Construction of Phases 1 and 2 will not be seen from this location. The left side of the view will remain unchanged, as the existing tree line is to be retained as part of the proposed development. In the centre of the image a new footpath leading into the public open space will be introduced. The public open space will consist of grass and groups of specimen trees to the left of the path and native woodland understory trees and shrubs to the right.</p>
Mitigation Measures & Factors	<p>A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects</p>
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	<p>The visual receptors are motorists, cyclists and walkers travelling on Orancourt Road as well as nearby residential houses. Hence visual receptor sensitivity is considered Medium.</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>As the proposed development site boundary adjoins Orancourt the magnitude of the change is considered High.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Quality: Negative Significance: Moderate Duration: Permanent</p>

Table 10.11 Viewpoint 4

	
Viewpoint 4 Maree Road South	Approximate Distance from site boundary: 360 metres Grid Reference E 137773 N 223610
View Description:	<p>View from the L4101 Maree local road in the townland of Oranmore, 360 metres west of the development site boundary. The local road, footpath and stone wall are apparent in the foreground of the image. Above the wall extensive, generally flat fields bordered on the far side by trees, shrubs and hedgerows can be seen. The development site can be seen beyond the dense tree lines and hedgerows marking the western boundary. The roof of a barn, located just outside the eastern site boundary, is visible to the left of the image. The view is predominantly rural in character.</p>
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	<p>During both the construction and operational phases, the proposed development will be partially visible from this viewpoint. Construction of the proposed site will take place in four phases, Phases 3 and 4 won't be seen from this location. The western boundary vegetation is to be retained and reinforced with a corridor of public open space behind with ample tree planting. Therefore, visibility of the proposed houses will be limited. There will be a very slight change to the character of the view by the introduction of partially visible man-made structures.</p>
Mitigation Measures & Factors	<p>A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects</p>
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	<p>The visual receptors are motorists, cyclists and walkers travelling on Maree Road as well as nearby residents of Orancourt. Hence visual receptor sensitivity is considered Low to Medium.</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>The distance to the development as well as screening within this view mean the magnitude of the change is considered Low.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Quality: Neutral Significance: Imperceptible Duration: Permanent</p>

Table 10.12 Viewpoint 5



Viewpoint 5 Coill Clocha	Approximate Distance from site boundary: adjacent to site Grid Reference E 138322 N 223875
View Description:	View from above a boundary wall of Coill Clocha, an adjacent residential development, in the townland of Oranhill. The 2 metre high wall currently screens the full view from residents, but is to be removed as part of the proposed development. In the foreground of the image re-vegetated overburden is visible on land adjacent to the site. The shrubs and trees in the centre of the image are located on the north-eastern site boundary. Further to the spoil heaps, there are other signs of dereliction in this view, in the form of building waste strewn around and damage to the groundcover by vehicle movement. There are partial medium-distance views of house gables to the right of the view. The character of the landscape in this viewpoint is of a derelict urban landscape.
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	During the construction phase, site works are unlikely to be visible from this location, as the high wall currently screening the site will not be removed until the proposed housing estate is near completion. Once the site is operational, there will be access through this adjacent land to the proposed development site, allowing more open views into the new development. The view will be through an adjacent permitted housing development to the site. Extensive street tree planting and public open spaces will be visible from this viewpoint once the proposed development is completed.
Mitigation Measures & Factors	A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects.
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	The visual receptors are residents living within the surrounding housing. Hence visual receptor sensitivity is considered High.
Magnitude of Change	As the foreground will be unaffected by the proposed development, the magnitude of the change is considered to be Medium.
Significance of Effect	Quality: Negative Significance: Moderate Duration: Permanent

Table 10.13 Viewpoint 6


	
Viewpoint 6 N67 (roundabout)	Approximate Distance from site boundary: 175 metres Grid Reference E138510 N223764
View Description:	<p>View from the N67 roundabout junction, in the townland of Oranhill approximately 175 metres east of the development site boundary. There are grassed-covered fields in the foreground of the view seen through a metal gate and beyond a heap of construction waste. The fields are separated by a post and wire fence line. The filed boundary of scrub, semi-mature trees and hedge remnants can be seen in the medium-distance. To the right of the image, the roof of a barn can be seen in the distance, which marks the eastern boundary of the proposed development site. Much of the existing hedgerow and trees along the eastern boundary are screened by intervening vegetation. The view is mainly rural in nature with some signs of urban dereliction</p>
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	<p>During the construction phase, there may be some visibility of works taking place on site. Also, the vegetation on the eastern site boundary will not be retained. Construction of the proposed site will take place in four phases, helping to reduce the impact on the landscape. Once the site is operational, this entrance will be used to access the site through adjacent land which was granted planning permission for housing development. The character of the view will become slightly more urban/suburban due to the proposed development.</p>
Mitigation Measures & Factors	<p>A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects</p>
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	<p>The visual receptors are motorists travelling on the national road. Hence visual receptor sensitivity is considered Low</p>
Magnitude of Change	<p>As the foreground of the view will not be affected, the magnitude of the change is considered Low to Medium.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Quality: Negative Significance: Not Significant Duration: Permanent</p>

Table 10.14 Viewpoint 7



Viewpoint 7 N67	Approximate Distance from site boundary: 258 metres Grid Reference E138646 N223764
View Description:	View from the N67 road in the townland of Oranhill approximately 258 metres east of the development site boundary. The foreground of the image shows an extensive field covered in grass sloping very gently upwards. Gaps between some hedgerows and trees on the horizon afford the passing motorists long-distance glimpses of Galway. The rooves of a barn and some houses are partially visible to the right of the view. This viewpoint is rural in nature.
Description of visual effects during implementation phases	Site topography acts as a screen, which will substantially block a view of both the construction and operational phases of the development. Construction of the proposed site will take place in four phases, helping to reduce the impact on the landscape. From this location, the roof lines of Phase 2 and 4 may be visible, which could affect the long-distance views. The proposed development is not anticipated to change the character to the view
Mitigation Measures & Factors	A detailed landscape Plan has been designed for the proposed development which will mitigate any potential visual effects
Visual Receptor Sensitivity	The visual receptors are motorists travelling on the national road. Hence visual receptor sensitivity is considered Low
Magnitude of Change	The distance to the development within this view and site topography mean the magnitude of the change is considered Low.
Significance of Effect	Quality: Negative Significance: Imperceptible Duration: Permanent

Table 10.15 Summary of Viewpoint Impact Assessment Results

Viewpoint No.	Impact Assessment Result		
	Quality	Significance	Duration
1	Negative	Slight	Permanent
2	Neutral	Imperceptible	Permanent
3	Negative	Moderate	Permanent
4	Neutral	Imperceptible	Permanent
5	Negative	Moderate	Permanent
6	Negative	Not Significant	Permanent
7	Negative	Imperceptible	Permanent

10.8 Likely and Significant Impacts and Associated Mitigation Measures

10.8.1 ‘Do-Nothing’ Scenario

If the proposed residential development were not to proceed, there would be no change to the existing environment. No further activity will take place on the subject site. The impact associated with the do-nothing scenario is neutral as the existing disturbed ground and scrub would not change significantly.

10.8.2 Construction Phase Impacts

10.8.2.1 Predicted Impacts on Landscape - Short Term Moderate Negative Impact

The predicted impacts arising from the proposed residential development will include noise and dust from construction operations as well as increased site traffic. These impacts are referred to in other sections of this EIAR report, but overall will have a Short Term, Slight Negative Impact on the character of the landscape. The *Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for Galway* adopted into the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 assigns the development site a high landscape value (however, an area designed as low landscape value lies within 700m of the site boundary) and medium landscape sensitivity. There are two designated views within 5.1 and 7.4 kilometres of the site. The development site is neither visible from these designated views nor are the views directed towards the site.

Although the agricultural grassland that covers the site will be removed during the construction phase, the intermittent visibility of the site ensures this will not significantly change the character of the local landscape. Numerous street trees in all areas of the proposed development as well as native planting and shrub and the planting of trees in public open spaces throughout the site, means that the appearance of the proposed buildings will be softened.

The construction is to be carried out in several phases, in order to reduce potential effects. This means that only certain areas of the site will have an impact on the landscape at a particular time, reducing the intensity of the impact on the landscape.

10.8.2.2 Predicted Visual Impacts– Short Term Slight to Moderate Negative Impact

The strategic phasing will also help mitigate against potential visual effects during construction. In general, the visibility of the proposed development site is restricted, with unrestricted views of construction during Phase 3 from Viewpoint 3 and partially visibility from the remaining viewpoints. Landform and vegetation screen views from the N67, allowing only intermittent views as illustrated by Viewpoints 6 and 7.

Overall, the impact will be Slight to Moderate during the construction phase.

10.8.3 Operational Phase Impacts

10.8.3.1 Predicted Impacts on Landscape - Permanent, Slight to Moderate, Neutral to Negative Impact

Minor impacts that may occur during the operational phase of the proposed development site will be small in nature, such as increased traffic to and from the development are referred to in other sections of this EIAR report. The introduction of the 202 No. residential buildings into the existing landscape represents new man-made elements, which in some views of the site will change the character of the landscape. However, distance and screening by landform and vegetation will lessen this impact and in certain locations where degradation of the landscape has occurred the change that will result in a positive effect.

Overall the proposed development will have a Permanent, Neutral to Negative Impact on the character of the landscape.

10.8.3.2 Predicted Visual Impacts– Permanent, Slight to Moderate, Neutral Impact

During the operational phase, Phases 3 will be the most visible from Viewpoint 3, along the Orancourt Road. All other Phases will have intermittent views, screened by topography and vegetation surrounding the site.

Overall the visual impact will be Permanent, Slight to Moderate, Neutral during the operational phases.

10.8.4 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed development site is zoned for residential development. As the development is surrounded by other permitted and operational residential developments, the impact of the proposed development in context of all other residential sites in the vicinity is considered to be low to medium.

10.8.5 Landscape Plan

The Landscape Master Plan, prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, has been well designed and will provide an attractive setting for the housing development. Existing trees and hedges are to be retained along the western site boundary and complemented by a wide strip of open informal public space running the length of the western boundary. This will provide significant screening to this side of the development and soften the transition from the urban character of the housing development to the adjacent SAC to the west. All residential roads have been designed with street trees and there are more formal ornamental open spaces away from the western boundary. The Landscape Master Plan is included in Appendix 3-3.

10.8.6 Residual Impacts

10.8.6.1 Predicted Impacts on Landscape – Permanent, Negative and Not Significant to Moderate Impact.

The proposed development site is located within the Galway County Development Plan's designation; LCA 13 - East Galway Bay (Oranmore to Kinvarra Bay and inland to N18). This area is characterised as having an 'intimate and sinuous' coastline with the landscape adjacent to the coast comprising pastureland in large fields bordered by mature hedgerows. The subject site is also classified in the Galway County Development Plan as being located within an area of Medium landscape sensitivity.

However, the site is within 700m of an extensive area classed as of Low value, which is located on the eastern side of the N67.

In Viewpoint 3 significant landscape elements, such as boundary trees and hedges seen to the right of this viewpoint are to be retained and the new elements that are being introduced such as a new footpath leading into a public open space with grass and groups of specimen trees to the left of the path and native woodland understory trees and shrubs to the right are in keeping with the character of the existing landscape character. Changes to the landscape will be minor in Viewpoints 4, 6 and 7. Due to the landscape degradation seen in Viewpoint 5 the proposed as part of the development are seen as improving the landscape. The rural nature of the landscape will change slightly in Viewpoints 1 and 2, due to the introduction of more urban elements within these views.

Overall the landscape impact is deemed Permanent, Negative and Not Significant to Moderate. The proposed development is in keeping with its zoning status and the emerging trends of development proposed in the vicinity.

10.8.6.2 Predicted Visual Impacts - Permanent Negative and Not Significant to Moderate Impact.

The site of the proposed development is in most places well screened from the surrounding areas in general.

While the proposed development will be visible from some views in the immediate vicinity, particularly from the south-west, as seen in Viewpoint 3, it is not visible over a significant area. The subject site will be visible intermittently from roadways to the west. Extensive planting of trees and shrubs as part of the proposed landscape masterplan will help to visually integrate and partially screen the proposed buildings. The views will be slightly modified, but on a localised level.

Overall the visual impact is deemed Permanent, Negative and Not Significant to Moderate. The proposed development is in keeping with its zoning status and the emerging trends of development proposed in the vicinity.