

11. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

11.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies and assesses the potential effects of the proposed development in Bearna, Co. Galway on the landscape and visual resource of the study area. It identifies the mitigation and compensation measures that will be implemented to prevent, reduce or offset potential adverse landscape and visual effects or enhance potential beneficial effects, where possible.

In the context of this project ‘landscape’ includes also sub-urban landscape.

This chapter considers how:

- Landscape effects associated with a development relate to changes to the fabric, character and quality of the landscape resource and how it is experienced; and
- Visual effects relate closely to landscape effects, but also concern changes in views as visual assessment is also concerned with people’s perception and response to changes in visual amenity.

This report covers the Landscape and Visual assessment methodology, a description of the subject development and the existing landscape as well as landscape policy and guidance relating to the subject site. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is also supported by booklets containing 9 photomontages (produced by G-Net 3D), which are included in Volume 2 of this EIAR.

11.1.1 Statement of Authority

This section of the EIAR has been prepared by Audrey Williams and assisted by Kathryn Blade. Audrey Williams is a Landscape Architect and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment Specialist with McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan Ltd. with two years professional working experience in both private and educational teaching practices from Canada and Sweden. Before taking up her position with MKO, Audrey was a landscape architecture research assistant and course leader at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Sweden, and a landscape architecture technician with HKLA in Canada.

Kathryn Blade (BSc LMLI) is a Landscape Architect who has specialist experience in conducting Landscape and Visual Impact assessments for projects ranging from urban and suburban developments to renewable energy projects as well as industrial, electricity and road infrastructure developments. She has a comprehensive track record in developing and managing landscape and visual impact assessments for both public and private clients. Kathryn is currently a Licentiate Member of the Landscape Institute and is on the pathway to achieving full Chartership (CMLI) status. Kathryn has developed and prepared EIA & EIAR chapters as part of the MKO’s Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment team including character assessments, feasibility studies, site suitability assessments and associated mapping. She has also produced residential visual impact assessments of individual private properties, manages the production of photomontages and the preparation of ZTV/TVI mapping and has been supervising the required maintenance period for mitigation planting schemes.

11.2 Proposed Development and Site Description

Planning permission will be sought by Burkeway Homes Limited for a 5-year permission for development on the site, which is in the townlands of Trusky East, Trusky West, Freeport and Ahaglugger, in the Village of Bearna, County Galway.

The site area comprises approximately 5.38ha of land located within the townlands of Trusky East, Trusky West, Freeport and Ahaglugger, approximately 6km to the west of Galway City [I.G. Ref.: M 23388 23615]. The site is bounded by improved agricultural grassland to the north and east and residential housing to the west and south.

The Proposed Development consists of 121 no. dwelling units, a creche and all associated ancillary site development works together with a public park along the Trusky Stream. A detailed description of the development is provided in Chapter 1 – Introduction.

The total development will likely comprise of that described above and shown below in Figure 11-1 subject to amendment through the EIA process and will be constructed over a four-year period, subject to planning approval. The regional and national impact of the development will include the provision of up to 300 jobs during construction and will support ongoing local employment in maintenance.

The site is well connected in terms of road and public transport links to Galway City. It is approximately a 17-minute drive to Galway City along the existing R336 (Bearna road). The proposed N6 extension will also service Bearna with a junction proposed less than 1km from the site entrance along the L-1321. This road will be upgraded towards Bearna village as part of the scheme through a footpath and some minor widening works.



Figure 11-1: Proposed Masterplan Design Drawing (McCauley Daye O'Connell Architects).

11.2.11 Guidelines and other information used in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

This chapter was prepared in accordance with the guidance on EIA identified in Chapter 1, where relevant. The following sources and guidelines were also used in the assessment:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), (The Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, UK, 2013).

- Visual Representation of Development Proposals, (Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, 17 September 2019);
- 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).
- Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 (Galway County Council, 2015) Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway (Galway County Council, 2015)

11.2.1.2 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 1 kilometre of the site is described with reference to landscape character as well as other landscape designations contained in the Galway County Council Development Plan. In addition, a field visit was undertaken to assess the landscape character and elements both on the site itself and in the wider landscape.

11.2.1.3 Methodology

This section sets out the methodology for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as a result of the Proposed Development.

11.2.1.4 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

This chapter has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Draft guidance document 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports', 2017, EPA guidance documents. Best practice guidance, such as the "*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013, Landscape Institute (UK) & IEMA*" provide specific guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessments. Therefore, a combination of the draft EPA guidelines, the Landscape Institute guidelines and professional experience has informed the methodology for the assessment herein. The Landscape Institute guidelines require the assessment to identify, predict and evaluate the significance of potential effects to landscape characteristics and established views. The assessment is based on an evaluation of the sensitivity to change and the magnitude of change for each landscape or visual receptor. For clarity, and in accordance with best practice, the assessment of potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity, although closely related, are undertaken separately.

The assessment acknowledges that landscape and visual effects change over time as the existing landscape external to the Proposed Development evolves and proposed planting establishes and matures.

The significance of an effect is determined by two distinct considerations:

- 1) The nature of the RECEPTOR likely to be affected, namely:
 - The **susceptibility** of the receptor to the type of change arising from the Proposed Development; and
 - The **sensitivity** to change is related to the **value** attached to the receptor.

- 2) The nature or magnitude of the EFFECT likely to occur, namely:
- The **size and scale** of the landscape and visual effect (for example, whether there is a complete or minor loss of a particular landscape element);
 - The **geographical extent** of the areas that will be affected;
 - The **duration** of the effect and its **reversibility**; and
 - The **quality** of the effect – whether it is neutral, beneficial or adverse.

Table 11- 1 below provides the definition of the duration of both landscape and visual effects.

Table 11-1: Definition of Duration of Effects

Duration	Description
Temporary	Effects lasting one year or less
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

The quality of both landscape and visual effects is defined in Table 11- 2 below:

Table 11-2: Definition of Quality of Effects

Quality of Effects	Description
Neutral	This will neither enhance nor detract from the landscape character or view
Positive (Beneficial)	This will improve or enhance the landscape character or view
Negative (Adverse)	This will reduce the quality of the existing landscape character or view

11.2.1.5 Assessment Process

The assessment is undertaken based on the following key tasks and structure:

- Establishment of the Baseline or receiving environment;
- Appreciation of the Proposed Development; and
- Assessment of effects.

11.2.1.6 Establishment of the Receiving Environment

A baseline study has been undertaken through a combination of desk-based research and site appraisal in order to establish the existing conditions of the landscape and visual resources of the study area. Desk based research has involved a review of mapping and aerial photography, relevant planning and policy documents, the relevant Landscape Character Assessments and other relevant documents and publications.

11.2.1.7 Appreciation of the Proposed Development

In order to be able to accurately assess the full extent of likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity it is essential to develop a thorough and detailed knowledge of the Proposed Development. This includes a comprehensive understanding of its location, nature and scale and is achieved through a review of detailed descriptions of the Proposed Development and drawings (see Planning Application Drawings accompanying the application) and an on-site appraisal.

11.2.1.8 Assessment of Effects

The landscape and visual impact assessment seeks to identify, predict and evaluate the significance of potential effects to landscape characteristics and established views. The assessments are based on an evaluation of the sensitivity to change and the magnitude of change for each landscape or visual receptor.

The assessment acknowledges that landscape and visual effects change over time as the existing landscape evolves and proposed planting establishes and matures. The assessment therefore reports on potential effects during both the construction phase and the operational phase of the proposed development. The prominence of the proposed development in the landscape or view will vary according to the existing screening effects of local topography, structures and buildings, intervening existing vegetation and type and height of the proposed structures.

11.2.1.9 Landscape Effects

Landscape effects describe the impact on the fabric or structure of a landscape or landscape character.

The assessment of landscape effects firstly requires the identification of the components of the landscape. The landscape components are also described as landscape receptors and comprise the following:

- Individual landscape elements or features;
- Specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects; and
- Landscape character, or the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements (natural and man-made) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another.

The assessment will identify the interaction between these components and the Proposed Development during construction and operational phases. The condition of the landscape and any evidence of current pressures causing change in the landscape will also be documented and described.

Landscape Value

Landscape value is frequently addressed by reference to international, national, regional and local designations, determined by statutory and planning agencies. However, absence of such a designation does not necessarily imply a lack of quality or value. Factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality, highly valuable as a local resource. The quality and condition is also considered in the determination of the value of a landscape. The evaluation of landscape value is undertaken with reference to the definitions stated in Table 11- 3 below.

Table 11-3: Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Classification Criteria
High	Nationally designated or iconic, unspoilt landscape with few, if any, degrading elements.

Medium	Regionally or locally designated landscape, or an undesignated landscape with locally important landmark features and some detracting elements.
Low	Undesignated landscape with few if any distinct features or with several degrading elements.

Landscape Susceptibility

Landscape susceptibility relates to the ability of a particular landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development. Landscape susceptibility is appraised through consideration of the baseline characteristics of the landscape, and in particular the scale or complexity of a given landscape.

The evaluation of landscape susceptibility is undertaken with reference to a three-point scale, as outlined in Table 11- 4 below:

Table 11-4: Landscape Susceptibility Criteria

Landscape Susceptibility	Classification Criteria
High	Small scale, intimate or complex landscape considered to be intolerant of even minor change.
Medium	Medium scale, more open or less complex landscape considered tolerant to some degree of change.
Low	Large scale, simple landscape considered tolerant of a large degree of change.

Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity to change is determined by employing professional judgment to combine and analyse the identified landscape value, quality and susceptibility and is defined with reference to the scale outlined in Table 11- 5 below:

Table 11-5: Landscape Sensitivity to Change Criteria

Landscape Sensitivity	Classification Criteria
High	<p>Landscape characteristics or features with little or no capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character.</p> <p>Landscape designated for its international or national landscape value or with highly valued features.</p> <p>Outstanding example in the area of well cared for landscape or set of features that combine to give a particularly distinctive sense of place.</p> <p>Few detracting or incongruous elements.</p>
Medium-High	Landscape characteristics or features with a low capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character.

	<p>Landscape designated for regional or county-wide landscape value where the characteristics or qualities that provided the basis for their designation are apparent or a landscape with highly valued features locally.</p> <p>Good example in the area of a well-cared for landscape or set of features that combine to give a clearly defined sense of place.</p>
Medium-Low	<p>Landscape characteristics or features which are reasonably tolerant of change without detriment to their present character.</p> <p>No designation present or of little local value.</p> <p>An example of an un-stimulating landscape or set of features; with some areas lacking a sense of place and identity.</p>
Low	<p>Landscape characteristics or features which are tolerant of change without detriment to their present character.</p> <p>An area with a weak sense of place and/or poorly defined character /identity.</p> <p>No designation present or of low local value or in poor condition.</p> <p>An example of monotonous unattractive visually conflicting or degraded landscape or set of features.</p>

Magnitude of Landscape Change

Magnitude of change is an expression of the size or scale of change in the landscape, the geographical extent of the area influenced and the duration and reversibility of the resultant effect. The variables involved are described below:

- The extent of existing landscape elements that will be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the character of the landscape;
- The extent to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered either by removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones;
- Whether the effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape, which are integral to its distinctive character;
- The geographic area over which the landscape effects will be felt (within the Project Development site itself; the immediate setting of the Project Development site; at the scale of the landscape type or character area; on a larger scale influencing several landscape types or character areas); and
- The duration of the effects (short term, medium term or long term) and the reversibility of the effect (whether it is permanent, temporary or partially reversible).

Changes to landscape characteristics can be both direct and indirect. **Direct change** occurs where the Proposed Development will result in a physical change to the landscape within or adjacent to the Project Development site. **Indirect changes** are a consequence of the direct changes resulting from the Proposed Development. They can often occur away from the Proposed Development site (for example, off-site construction staff parking) and may be a result of a sequence of interrelationships or a complex pathway (for example, a new road or footpath construction may increase public access and associated problems e.g. littering). They may be separated by distance or in time from the source of the effects. The magnitude of change affecting the baseline landscape resource is based on an interpretation of a combination of the criteria set out in Table 11- 6 below.

Table 11-6: Magnitude of Landscape Change Criteria (Landscape Effects)

Magnitude of Landscape Change	Classification Criteria
None	<p>Landscape characteristics or features with little or no capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character.</p> <p>Landscape designated for its international or national landscape value or with highly valued features.</p> <p>Outstanding example in the area of well cared for landscape or set of features that combine to give a particularly distinctive sense of place.</p> <p>Few detracting or incongruous elements.</p>
Negligible	<p>Landscape characteristics or features with a low capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering their present character.</p> <p>Landscape designated for regional or county-wide landscape value where the characteristics or qualities that provided the basis for their designation are apparent or a landscape with highly valued features locally.</p> <p>Good example in the area of a well-cared for landscape or set of features that combine to give a clearly defined sense of place.</p>
Low	<p>Landscape characteristics or features which are reasonably tolerant of change without detriment to their present character.</p> <p>No designation present or of little local value.</p> <p>An example of an un-stimulating landscape or set of features; with some areas lacking a sense of place and identity.</p>
Medium	<p>Noticeable change, affecting some key characteristics and the experience of the landscape; and</p> <p>Introduction of some uncharacteristic elements.</p>
High	<p>Noticeable change, affecting many key characteristics and the experience of the landscape; and</p> <p>Introduction of many incongruous developments</p>
Very High	<p>Highly noticeable change, affecting most key characteristics and dominating the experience of the landscape; and</p> <p>Introduction of highly incongruous development.</p>

11.2.1.10 Visual Effects

Visual effects are determined by the extent of visibility and the nature of the visibility (i.e. how a development is seen within the landscape); for example, whether it appears integrated and balanced within the visual composition of a view or whether it creates a focal point.

Negative visual effects may occur through the intrusion of new elements into established views, which are out of keeping with the existing structure, scale and composition of the view. Visual effects may also be beneficial, where an attractive focus is created in a previously unremarkable view or the influence of

previously detracting features is reduced. The significance of effects will vary, depending on the nature and degree of change experienced and the perceived value and composition of the existing view.

Receptors

For there to be a visual impact, there is the need for a viewer. Views experienced from locations such as settlements, recognised routes and popular vantage points used by the public have been included in the assessment. Receptors are the viewers at these locations. The degree to which receptors, i.e. people, will be affected by changes as a result of the Proposed Development depends on a number of factors, including:

- Receptor activities, such as taking part in leisure, recreational and sporting activities, travelling or working;
- Whether receptors are likely to be stationary or moving and how long they will be exposed to the change at any one time;
- The importance of the location, as reflected by designations, inclusion in guidebooks or other travel literature, or the facilities provided for visitors;
- The extent of the route or area over which the changes will be visible;
- Whether receptors will be exposed to the change daily, frequently, occasionally or rarely;
- The orientation of receptors in relation to the Proposed Development and whether views are open or intermittent;
- Proportion of the developments that will be visible (full, sections or none);
- Viewing direction, distance (i.e. short-, medium- and long-distance views) and elevation;
- Nature of the viewing experience (for example, static views, views from settlements and views from sequential points along routes);
- Accessibility of viewpoint (public or private, ease of access);
- Nature of changes (for example, changes in the existing skyline profile, creation of a new visual focus in the view, introduction of new man-made objects, changes in visual simplicity or complexity, alteration of visual scale, landform and change to the degree of visual enclosure); and
- Nature of visual receptors (type, potential number and sensitivity of viewers who may be affected).

Value of the View

Value of the view is an appraisal of the value attached to views and is often informed by the appearance on Ordnance Survey of tourist maps and in guidebooks, literature or art. Value can also be indicated by the provision of parking or services and signage and interpretation. The nature and composition of the view is also an indicator. The value of the view is determined with reference to the definitions outlined in Table 11- 7 below:

Table 11-7: Value of the View

Value	Classification criteria
High	Nationally recognised view of the landscape, with no detracting elements.
Medium	Regionally or locally recognised view, or unrecognised but pleasing and well composed view, with few detracting elements.
Low	Typical or poorly composed view often with numerous detracting elements.

Visual Susceptibility

The GLVIA guidelines identify that the susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is a function of:

- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at a particular location; and
- The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and visual amenity they experience at particular locations.

For example, residents in their home, walkers whose interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or a particular view, or visitors at an attraction where views are an important part of the experience often indicate a higher level of susceptibility. Whereas receptors occupied in outdoor sport, where views are not important, or at their place of work, are often considered less susceptible to change. Visual susceptibility is determined with reference to the three-point scale and criteria outlined in Table 11- 8 below.

Table 11-8: Visual Susceptibility

Susceptibility	Classification criteria
High	Receptors for which the view is of primary importance and are likely to notice even minor change.
Medium	Receptors for which the view is important but not the primary focus and are tolerant of some change.
Low	Receptors for which the view is incidental or unimportant and is tolerant of a high degree of change

Visual Sensitivity

Sensitivity to change considers the nature of the receptor; for example, a person occupying a residential dwelling is generally more sensitive to change than someone working in a factory unit. The importance of the view experienced by the receptor also contributes to an understanding of the susceptibility of the visual receptor to change as well as the value attached to the view.

A judgement is also made on the value attached to the views experienced. This takes account of:

- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations;
- Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearance in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (sign boards, interpretive material) and references to them in literature or art; and
- Possible local value: it is important to note that the absence of view recognition does not preclude local value, as a view may be important as a resource in the local or immediate environment due to its relative rarity or local importance.

The visual sensitivity to change is based on interpretation of a combination of all or some of the criteria outlined in Table 11- 9 below:

Table 11-9: Sensitivity to Change Criteria

Visual sensitivity	Classification criteria
High	Users of outdoor recreational facilities, on recognised national cycling or walking routes or in nationally designated landscapes. Residential buildings.

Medium-high	<p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities, in highly valued landscapes or locally designated landscapes or on local recreational routes that are well publicised in guidebooks.</p> <p>Road and rail users in nationally designated landscapes or on recognised scenic routes, likely to be travelling to enjoy the view.</p>
Medium	<p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities including public open space in moderately valued landscapes.</p> <p>Users of primary transport road network, orientated towards the Proposed Development, likely to be travelling for other purposes than just the view.</p>
Medium-Low	<p>People engaged in active outdoor sports or recreation and less likely to focus on the view.</p> <p>Primary transport road network and rail users likely to be travelling to work with oblique views of the project or users of minor road network.</p>
Low	<p>People engaged in work activities indoors, with limited opportunity for views of the Proposed Development.</p>

Magnitude of Visual Change

Visual effects are direct effects as the magnitude of change within an existing view will be determined by the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development. The magnitude of the visual effect resulting from the development at any particular viewpoint or receptor is based on the size or scale of change in the view, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The variables involved are described below:

- The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape form, scale, mass, line, height, skylining, back-grounding, visual clues, focal points, colour and texture;
- The nature of the view of the Proposed Development, in relation to the amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses;
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor, distance of the viewpoint from the development and the extent of the area over which the changes will be visible; and
- The duration of the effects (short term, medium term or long term) and the reversibility of the effect (whether it is permanent, temporary or partially reversible).

The magnitude of visual effect resulting from the development at any particular viewpoint or receptor is based on the interpretation of the above range of factors and is set out in Table 11- 10 below:

Table 11-10: Magnitude of Visual Change Criteria (Visual effects)

Magnitude	Classification criteria
None	No change in the existing view.

Negligible	The development will cause a barely discernible change in the existing view.
Low	The development will cause very minor changes to the view over a wide area or minor changes over a limited area.
Medium	The development will cause modest changes to the existing view over a wide area or noticeable change over a limited area.
High	The development will cause a considerable change in the existing view over a wide area or a significant change over a limited area.
Very High	The development will cause significant changes in the existing view over a wide area or a change which will dominate over a limited area.

11.2.1.11 Duration and Quality of Effects

Table 11- 11 below provides the definition of the duration of landscape and visual effects:

Table 11-11: Definition of Duration of Effects

Duration	Description
Temporary	Effects lasting one year or less.
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.

The quality of both, landscape and visual effects, can be Beneficial (Positive), Adverse (Negative) or Neutral according to the definitions set out in Table 11- 12 overleaf:

Table 11-12: Definition of Quality of Effects

Magnitude	Classification Criteria
Neutral	The Proposed Development will neither enhance or detract from the landscape character of view
Beneficial (Positive)	The Proposed Development will enhance the existing landscape character or view
Adverse (Negative)	The Proposed Development will reduce the quality of the existing landscape character or view

11.2.1.12 Significance Criteria

The objective of the assessment process is to identify and evaluate the potentially significant effects arising from the Proposed Development. The assessment will identify the residual effects likely to arise from the finalised design taking into account mitigation measures and the change over time.

The significance of effects is assessed by considering the sensitivity of the receptor and the predicted magnitude of effect in relation to the baseline conditions. In order to provide a level of consistency and transparency to the assessment and allow comparisons to be made between the various landscape and visual receptors subject to assessment, the assessment of significance is informed by pre-defined criteria as outlined in the table below. When assessing significance, individual effects may fall across several different categories of significance and professional judgement is therefore used to determine which category of significance best fits the overall effect to a landscape or visual receptor.

The significance of the effects can be adverse (negative) or beneficial (positive) according to the definitions set out in Table 11- 13 below:

Table 11-13: Categories of Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

Significance Category	Description of Effect
Profound	An effect that obliterates sensitive characteristics within the landscape and/or visual environment.
Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the landscape and/or visual environment.
Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the landscape and/or visual environment.
Moderate	An effect that alters the landscape in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the landscape and/or visual environment without affecting its sensitivities.
Not Significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the landscape and/or visual environment but without significant landscape and/or visual consequences.
Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant landscape and/or visual consequences.

The significance of the effect is determined by considering the magnitude of the effect and the quality of the baseline environment affected by the Proposed Development. The basis for consideration of the significance of effects is shown in Figure 11- 2.

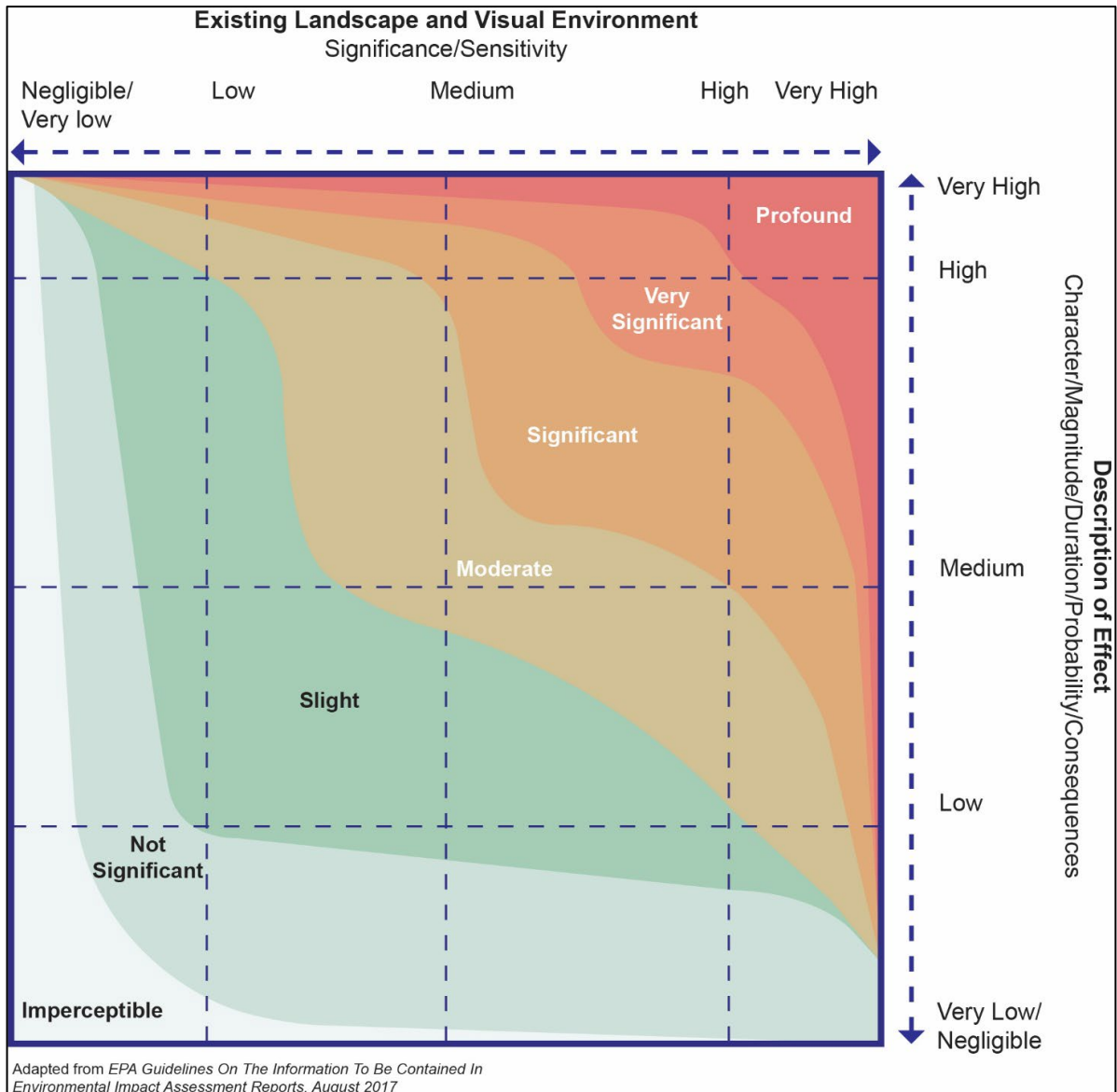


Figure 11-2: Basis for consideration of significance of effects

Effects will be assessed for all phases of the Proposed Development. Construction effects are considered to be temporary, short term effects which occur during the construction/decommission phase only. Operational/residual effects are those long-term effects, which will occur as a result of the presence or operation of the development.

The quality of each effect is based on the ability of the landscape character or visual receptor to accommodate the Proposed Development, and the impact of the development within the receiving context. Once this is done, the quality of the effect is then assessed as being neutral, beneficial or adverse. A change to the landscape or visual resource is not considered to be adverse simply because it constitutes an alteration to the existing situation.

11.2.1.13 Cumulative Effects

The approach used to determine cumulative effects has drawn on guidance on cumulative impact assessment published by the GLVIA3. Cumulative landscape and visual effects may result from additional changes to the baseline landscape or views as a result of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other developments of a similar type and scale.

The cumulative assessment includes developments that are consented but not constructed, that are the subject of undetermined applications, or are currently at scoping which are similar in type and scale to the Proposed Development.

The list of cumulative developments has been compiled from known planning applications available on Planning Search of Galway County Council’s website and known proposed public sector projects.

Magnitude of Cumulative Effects

The principle of magnitude of cumulative effects makes it possible for the proposed scheme to have a major impact on a particular receptor, while having only a minor cumulative impact in conjunction with other existing developments.

The magnitude of cumulative effects arising from the proposed scheme is assessed as **very high, high, medium, low or negligible, with intermediate categories**, based on interpretation of the following parameters:

- The additional extent, direction and distribution of existing and other developments in combination with the Proposed Development;
- The distance between the viewpoint, the Proposed Development and the cumulative developments; and
- The landscape setting, context and degree of visual coalescence of existing and Proposed Development and cumulative developments.

Significance of Cumulative Effects

As for the assessment of landscape and visual effects, the significance of any cumulative effects follows a similar classification and will be assessed as **major, moderate, minor or negligible, with intermediate categories**. This considers both receptor sensitivity and the predicted magnitude of change.

Limitations of Cumulative Assessment

The cumulative assessment focuses on potential cumulative effects relating to the main permanent structure of each cumulative development. This is due to the uncertainty of the timing of construction activities for each of the identified developments. As a result, temporary structures and activity relating to construction have not been considered within the cumulative assessment.

11.2.1.14 Field Work

A site survey of the study area and beyond was carried out on 05th May 2020 identifying the potential visibility of the Proposed Development and key viewpoints within the study area and the wider landscape. Photomontages showing the existing view and the superimposed development have been produced from key representative viewpoints, taking into account topography, existing buildings, screening vegetation and other localised factors. The Photomontage Booklet included in Volume 2 of the ELAR by GNet3D, provides details on viewpoint locations and includes Photomontages 1 – 9.

11.2.1.15 Selection of Viewpoints

Viewpoint selection has been carried out according to the current best practice standards and the following industry guideline:

- ‘Visual Representation of Development Proposals’, Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, 17 September 2019

It is not feasible to take photography from every possible viewpoint located in the study area. Photography has been taken from viewpoints, which are representative of the nature of visibility at

various distances and in various contexts. Viewpoint photography is used as a tool to come to understand the nature of the potential residual effects. The selection process of viewpoint locations is as follows:

- The location of viewpoints within the study area is informed by desktop and site surveys;
- Identification and selection of representative viewpoints showing typical open or intermittent views within a local area, which will be frequently experienced by a range of viewers; and
- Identification and selection of specific viewpoints from key viewpoints in the landscape such as routes or locations valued for their scenic amenity, main settlements etc.

11.2.1.16 Photomontages

Photomontages are photorealistic visualisations produced using specialist software. They illustrate the likely future appearance of the Proposed Development from a specific viewing point. They are useful tools for examining the impact of the development from a number of critical viewpoint positions along the public road network within the study area.

However, photomontages in themselves can never provide the full picture in terms of potential impacts, they can only inform the assessment process by which judgements are made. A visualisation can never show exactly what the Proposed Development will look like in reality due to factors such as; different lighting, weather and seasonal conditions which vary through time and the resolution of the image. As the photomontages are representative of viewing conditions encountered, some of them may show existing buildings or vegetation screening some or all parts of the developments. Such conditions are normal and representative.

The images provided give a reasonable impression of the scale of the development and the distance to the development but can never be 100% accurate. It is recommended that decision-makers and any interested parties or members of the public should ideally visit the viewpoints on site, where visualisations can be compared to the ‘real life’ view, and the full impact of the Proposed Development can be understood.

The visual impact assessment on site identified a range of viewpoints located within the study area at varying distances from the Proposed Developments to show the effect of the development in key close, middle and distant views.

Viewpoints / Photomontages 1 - 9 show the Proposed Development including the following information:

- Existing View, showing the baseline image; and
- Photomontage, showing the Proposed Development including all visible components at full height. Red wirelines indicate areas where the Proposed Development is screened by intervening structures and / or vegetation.

Photomontage images have been produced with reference to best practice and the following industry guidelines:

- Visual Representation of Development Proposals’, Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 06/19, 17 September 2019; and
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), Third Edition, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, IEMA, 2013.

11.2.1.17 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

Mapping the extent of the area from which a development is likely to be visible is commonly referred to as a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). ZTV prediction does not take into account the effects of seasons, lighting, weather conditions or visibility over distance. Moreover, a ZTV does not take into

account the screening effects of existing vegetation or built structures and can omit topographical variations of up to 10m. Therefore, in reality, ZTV mapping's principal use is to identify viewing points for further analysis.

Considering the varied topography of County Galway, and Galway City as well as the absence of sufficient 3D data of existing building structures located within the study area, the production of a ZTV would not have been useful in the identification of viewpoints within the study area. The assessment relied therefore on comprehensive site surveys to establish the nature of visibility within the study area and to identify and review key viewpoint locations.

11.2.2 Scope

11.2.2.1 Study Area

A study area of 1km radius from the boundary of the Proposed Development site has been selected to identify potential significant landscape and visual effects within County Galway (refer to Figure 11-10: Landscape Designations). The extent of the study area has been identified through a review of maps, aerial photographs of the development site and subsequently verified during site surveys.

It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development may be visible from locations beyond the study area, mainly from elevated locations, and as such it is important to note that the 1km study area defines the area within which potential effects could be significant, rather than defining the extent of visibility.

Photomontages have been produced to describe and illustrate views from representative viewpoints located within the study area.

11.2.2.2 Temporal Scope

The type and duration of landscape and visual effects falls within two main stages as follows:

Construction (temporary and of short duration)

- Potential physical effects arising from construction of the development on the landscape resource within the development application boundary area;
- Potential effects to landscape character or visual amenity within the wider study area as a result of visibility of construction activities or the development during construction;
- Effects of temporary site infrastructure such as – site traffic; construction compounds; and
- Potential effects of partially built development in various stages of construction.

Operational

- Potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape resources and landscape character, including the perceptual qualities of the landscape;
- Potential effects of the Proposed Development on views and visual amenity; and
- Potential cumulative effects of the development in combination with other planned and Proposed Developments of a similar type and scale upon the landscape and visual resource of the study area.

11.3 Receiving Environment

11.3.1 Site Context

The Proposed Development site is located in Bearna, a coastal village, approximately 6 kilometres to the west of Galway City. The application site is situated in the townlands of Trusky East, Trusky West, Freeport and Ahaglugger, Bearna, Co. Galway. The site is accessed via an existing residential development ‘Cnoc Fraoigh’ at Trusky East. The application site measures approximately 5.38 hectares in area with a net site area of 3.47 hectares which refers to the lands zoned for residential development.

To the west of the site is the existing development of Cnoc Fraoigh which connects the site to the Moycullen Road linking to the village and the R336 Galway City to Spiddal Road. A series of ribbon developments to the north of Cnoc Fraoigh bound the site on the northwest and the remaining lands to the north and east are agricultural lands. To the south are lands zoned ‘Open Space/Recreation & Amenity’. The immediate vicinity consists of primarily suburban single-family housing developments with the nucleus of the village of Bearna located 0.45km southwest of the proposed development.

The site is currently formed of scrub and rough agricultural grazing and the lands are generally bound to the north and south by stone walls. The application site incorporates existing features of significance which are being incorporated into the proposed scheme. The western boundary is generally defined by a 2-metre-high block wall to the rear of the existing dwellings at Cnoc Fraoigh and to the northwest by native stone walls forming the townland boundary between Trusky East and Trusky West. The Trusky Stream runs in a north-south direction to the east of the site.

The Proposed Development consists of 121 no. dwelling units, a creche, all associated ancillary site development works together with a public park along the Trusky Stream. A detailed description of the development is provided in Chapter 1 - Project Introduction.

11.3.2 Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021

11.3.2.1 Landscape Policies and Objectives

The Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (hereafter referred to as: the GCDP) 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.

11.3.2.2 Landscape Character Assessment

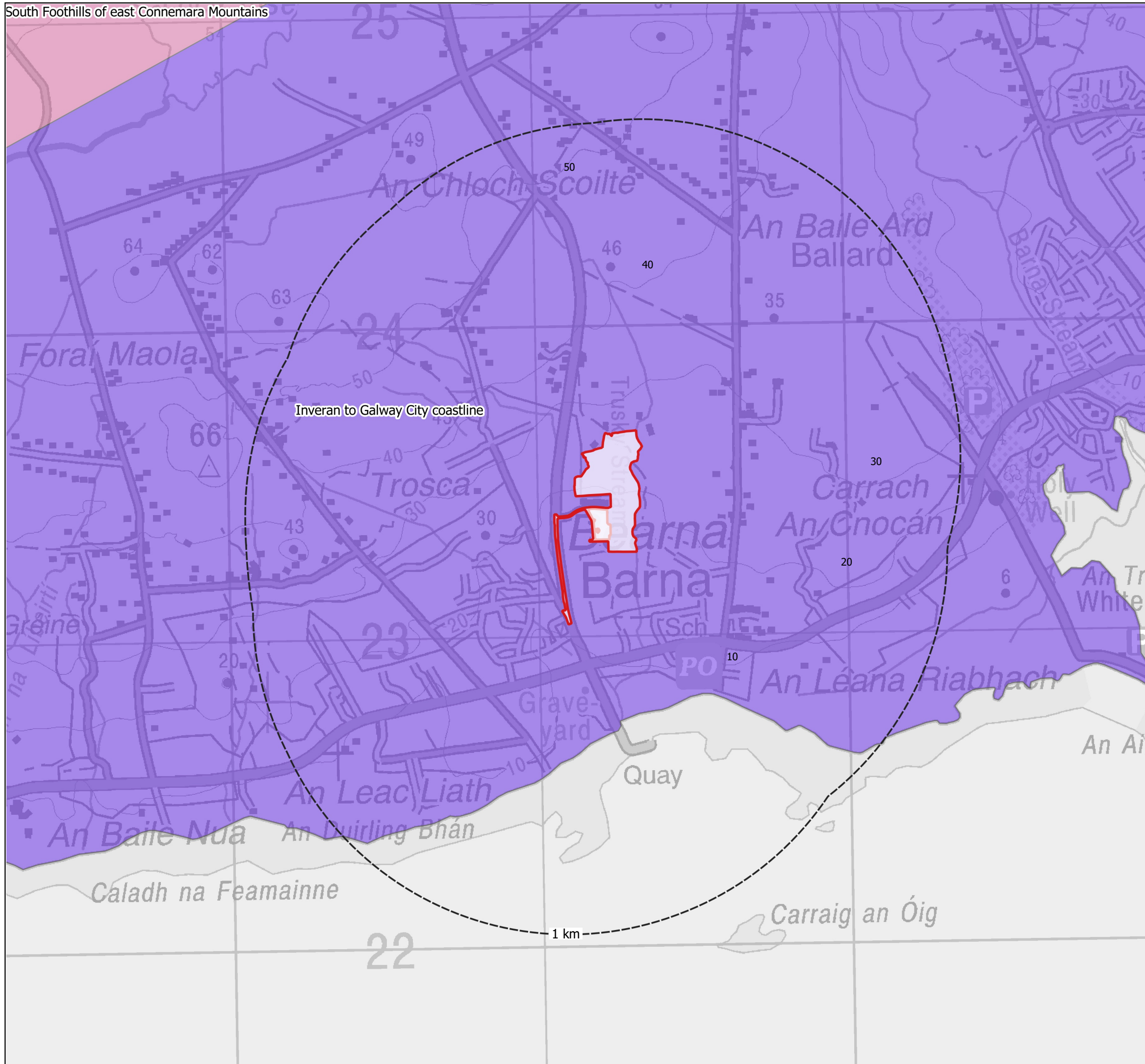
The Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway (hereafter referred to as: the LLCACG), published by Galway County Council in 2002, divides the county into 25 distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).

LCA designations have not changed since the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment and have been carried forward for use in the GCDP 2015-2021, therefore they are still current and relevant for use in this LVIA.

As illustrated in Figure 11- 3 (below), *LCA 9 Inervan to Galway City coastline* is the only LCA that falls within the LVIA study area (1 km from the proposed development), and is listed below with a description as reported in the LLCACG:

“LCA 9 – Inervan to Galway City Coastline: The coast is flat, comprising rocks and sand merging with natural grassland towards the R336. The coastline commands striking views of County Clare and the Aran Islands. Further inland from the R336 route, there are residential and some light industrial developments which have lowered the scenic value in this area

As illustrated in Figure 11- 3, the proposed development is located within the Village of Bearna and assessment of landscape character also needs to consider the landscape and visual policy with regards to the different zoning within the Village of Bearna, as outlined in Section 11.4.3.



Map Legend

- Site Boundary
- 10m Contours
- Co. Galway Landscape Character Areas
- Inveran to Galway City coastline
- South Foothills of east Connemara Mountains



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Drawing Title
Landscape Character Areas

Project Title
Burkeway Barna Strategic Housing Development

Drawn By AW	Checked By KB
Project No. 190450a	Drawing No. Figure 11-3
Scale 1:20000	Date 2020.29.09



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11.3.3 Landscape Value and Sensitivity

As part of the landscape assessment in the LLCACG a landscape value was assigned to each LCA, based upon cultural, socio-economic and environmental landscape values. Landscape value designations are illustrated on map *LCM1* of the GCDP and reported in *Table 2.1* of the LLCACG, ratings of LCA value use the following classifications:

- > *Class 1 - Low*
- > *Class 2 - Medium*
- > *Class 3 - High*
- > *Class 4 - Outstanding*

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. Landscape sensitivity designations are illustrated on map *LCM2* of the GCDP and reported in *Table 2.1* of the LLCACG, ratings of landscape sensitivity for each landscape area use the following classifications:

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

The landscape value and sensitivity rating of LCA 9 as reported in the LLCACG are presented in Table 11- 14 below.

Table 11-14: Landscape Character Areas – Designated Landscape Value and Landscape Sensitivity Ratings

Landscape Character Area	Galway County Council Assigned Landscape Value (Table 2.1 LLCACG)	Galway County Council Assigned Landscape Sensitivity (Table 2.1 LLCACG)
LCA 9 – Inervan to Galway City Coastline	High	Class 3 – Medium with a parallel strip of Class 4 - Special

The landscape values and sensitivities assigned to LCA 9 (reported in Table 11.5) does not apply specifically to the area where the proposed development site is located and is of a general nature. *Figure 11- 4 (LCM1)* and *Figure 11- 5 (LCM2)* below show the landscape value and landscape sensitivity classifications as outlined in the GCDP. The location of the proposed development site is highlighted in red on both maps.

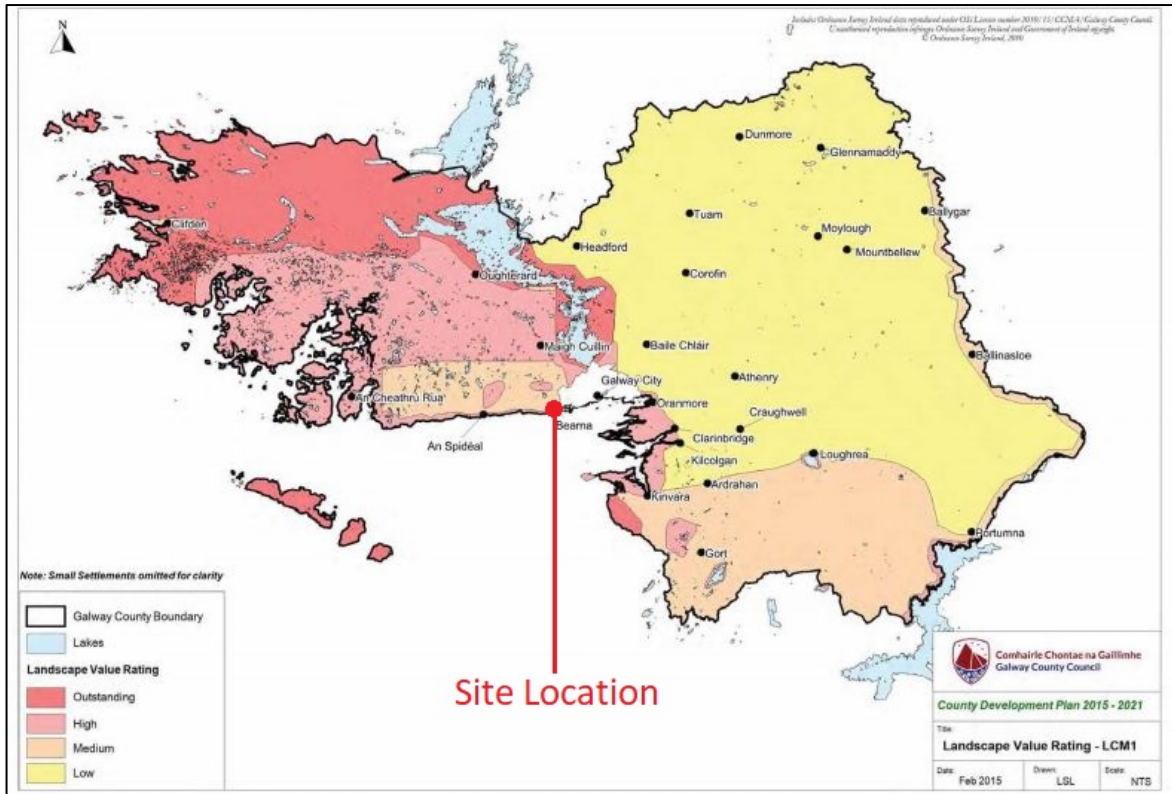


Figure 11-4: Designated Landscape Value Rating for County Galway (Galway County Council, 2015)

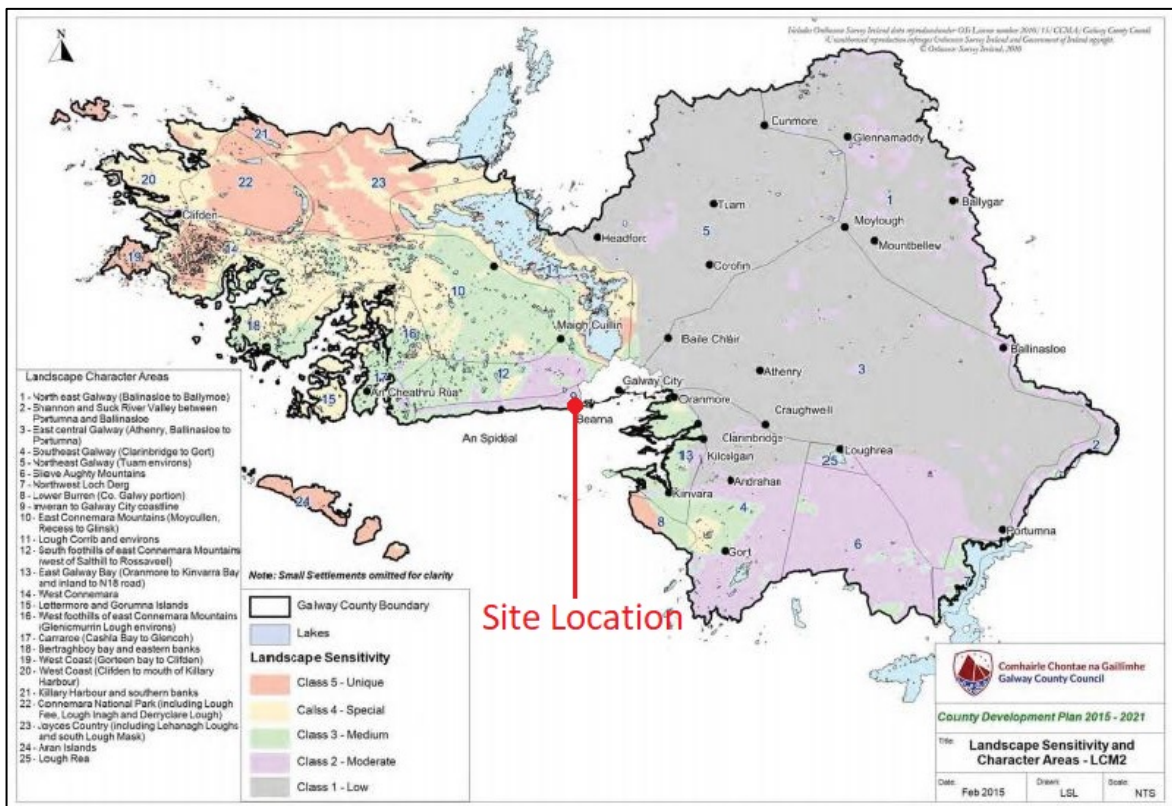


Figure 11-5: Designated Landscape Sensitivity Rating for County Galway (Galway County Council, 2015)

The landscape value of the study area is designated as High and the landscape sensitivity of the study area is designated as Class 3 – Medium with a parallel strip of Class 4 - Special by the Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment for County Galway, as shown in Figure 11- 4 and Figure 11- 5.

11.3.3.1 Focal Points and Views

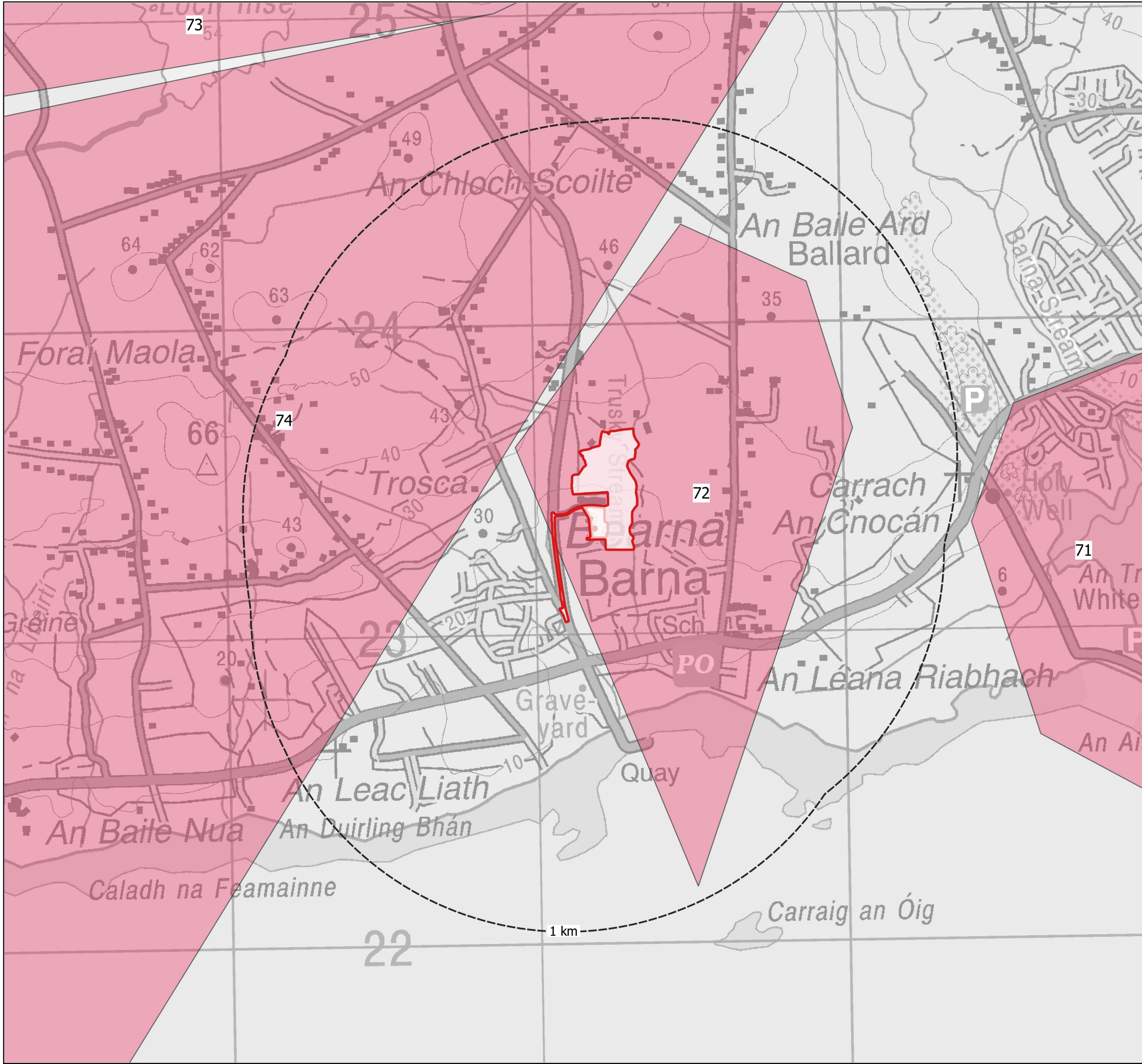
The Galway County Council Landscape and Landscape Character Assessment lists 122 focal points and views within the county in map *FPV1* of the GCDP and includes the following objective:

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.

A 1km study area was used in this assessment to identify the key landscape features in close proximity to the site boundary.

Figure 11- 6 shows the Designated Focal Points and Views from Map FPV1 of the LLCACG within the 1km study area. The views are difficult to ascertain the exact location and focus of the view and the accompanying view/focal point descriptions are of a general nature as they mostly do not specify the locations from where the views are seen and their direction or focus often covers extensive areas. 2 No. focal points and views were identified within the 1km study area and are shown in Figure 11- 6 and Table 11-6 (below).



Map Legend

- Site Boundary
- Co. Galway Focal Points and Views



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Drawing Title
Focal Points and Scenic Views

Project Title
Burkeway Barna Strategic Housing Development

Drawn By AW	Checked By KB
Project No. 190450a	Drawing No. Figure 11-6
Scale 1:20000	Date 2020.29.09



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There are no designated focal points or views pertaining to the proposed site. However, 2 No. scenic viewpoints were identified within the LVIA study area (1 km radius from the site).

Table 11- 15 lists the County Galway designated scenic views and focal points identified within close proximity of the proposed development.

Table 11-15: Designated Scenic Views /Focal Points located within the LVIA study area.

Scenic View Number	Viewpoint Name /Description (Map FPV1, GCDP)
72	View of sea from north of Bearna
74	View of North Clare Coast

Due to the ambiguous and unspecific nature of the available information regarding scenic views / focal points in the GCDP and LLCACG, assumptions have been made to determine the location where these views originate and the direction in which they are focussed.

Scenic View No. 72: Figure 11- 6 indicates that the majority of the proposed site is located within View 72 – View of the sea from north of Bearna. It is assumed that this view originates on the elevated lands north of Bearna and the direction of the view is focussed south, southeast and southwest towards the sea as the GCDP description indicates. During a site visit in July 2020, the assessment concluded that some areas of the proposed development will be seen from the elevated position north of Bearna but will not impact or obstruct views of the sea due to the presence of screening by local topography and mature treelines.

Scenic View No. 74: The stated focus of the view is ‘View of North Clare Coast’. It is assumed that the origin of this view is similar to that of No. 72 and the direction of the view is southwest, south and southeast towards the sea and North Clare Coast and not in the direction of the proposed site. Therefore, the proposed development will not impact this designated view/focal point due to local screening by local topography and vegetation.

In summary, based on the information obtained from the GCDP there will be no landscape and visual effects upon the scenic amenity of Views 72 and 74 arising from the proposed development.

11.3.4 Variation No. 2(a) of the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (Bearna Plan)

11.3.4.1 Land Use Zoning

Variation No.2(a) to the Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (Bearna Plan) outlines specific land use zoning and objectives. According to the Bearna Plan, the application site is located primarily within ‘R’ – Residential (Phase 1) and ‘OS’ Open Space/Recreation & Amenity zoned lands, as illustrated on Figure 11- 7 (below). All the lands zoned ‘OS’ within the subject site are also identified as being under Constrained Land Use. The proposed footpath connectivity link along the L-1321 is proposed on lands zoned ‘TI – Transport Infrastructure’ and partially on lands zoned for the ‘Proposed Bearna Inner Relief Road’.

The primary land use objectives for land use management is as follows:

Objective LU2 - Residential (R): *“Promote the development of appropriate and serviced lands to provide for high quality, well laid out and well landscaped sustainable residential communities with an appropriate mix of housing types and densities, together with complementary land uses such as community facilities, local services and public transport*

facilities, to serve the residential population of the area. Protect existing residential amenities and facilitate compatible and appropriately designed new infill development, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.’

Objective LU4 - Open Spaces/Recreation and Amenity (OS): “Promote the development of open spaces and recreational activities in accordance with best practice and on suitable lands with adequate access to the local community and retain existing open space and recreational facilities, unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of Galway County Council that these uses are no longer required by the community. Ensure that any flood risk areas within the OS zone are appropriately managed to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate, as appropriate, the risk and potential impact of flooding.’

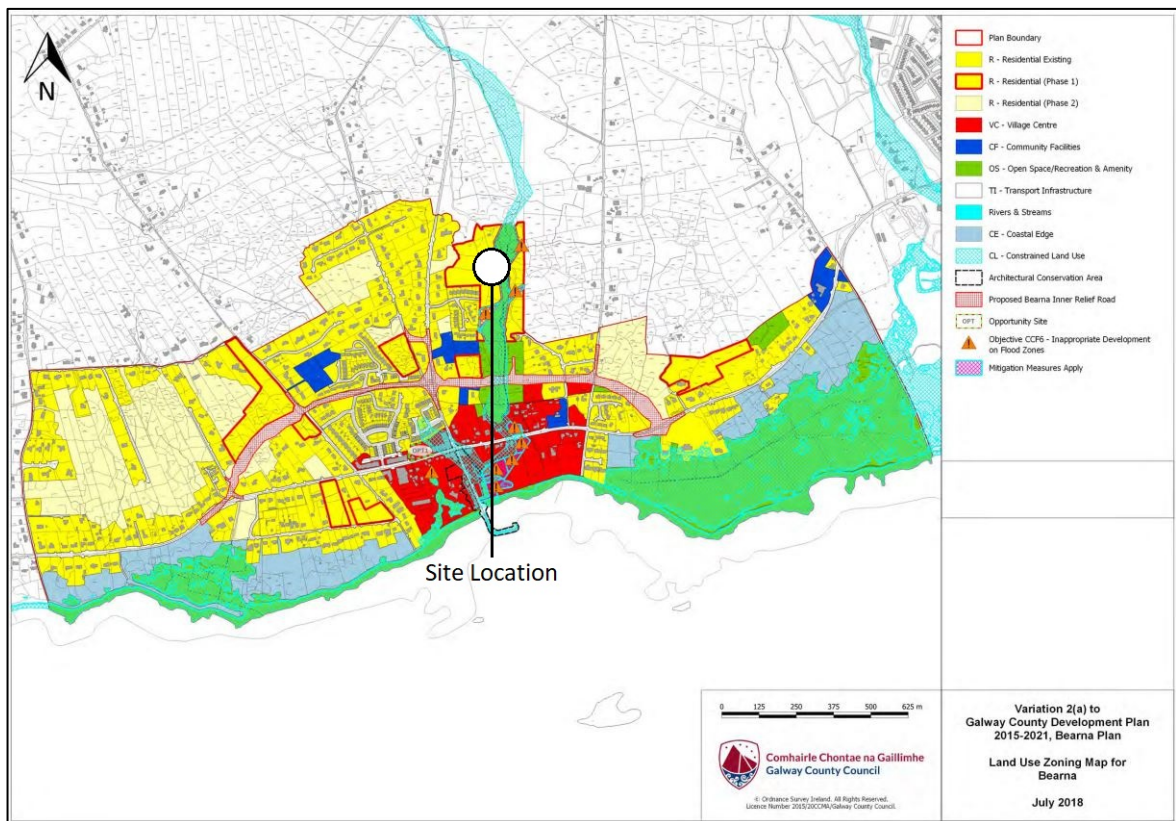


Figure 11-7: Extracted from Variation 2(a) to Galway County Development Plan showing the Bearna Land Use Zoning Map (Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021).

11.3.4.1.1 Landscape Objective

Section 1.4.3 of the Bearna Plan deals with urban design and landscape objective. It states that “*the preferred development option seeks to ensure the delivery of high quality, sustainable living environments which are attractive, safe, vibrant, and meet the needs of the residents of the local community, businesses and tourists alike.*” It goes on to say that this will achieve the ‘*successful urban design that is essential in the creation of attractive, sustainable living and working environments and contributes to the establishment of the unique identity and sense of place for the village, which is crucial to the vitality and success of the village centre*’

To this end the following urban design and landscape objective has been included:

Objective UD1 – Public Spaces and Streets: “Promote the development of high-quality public spaces consisting of streets, squares, parks and amenities connected by a network of pedestrian and cycling routes. Public spaces should have a high standard of design and street furniture

that will create a coherent character for the area. This would include appropriately designed and located park benches, bus shelters, cycle storage facilities, refuse bins, signage, street sculpture, etc. but avoid the over-proliferation of different elements and/or cluttering of public spaces.’

11.3.4.1.2 *Strategic Vision for Bearna*

The Bearna Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision, intended to guide the future growth and development of Bearna in a sustainable manner, achieving the overall objectives set out for the Bearna village.

The strategic vision statement for the Bearna Plan aims to:

‘promote Bearna as a sustainable and vibrant coastal village, which maintains its attractive character, capitalises on its existing and future accessibility strengths, while offering a pleasant environment for a growing community, for living, shopping, education, business, recreation and tourism, all balanced against the need to safeguard and enhance the environmental sensitivities of the area, for present and future generations to come.’

11.3.4.2 **Walking Routes, Cycleways and Tourism Trails**

The following objective listed in Chapter 10 of the GCDP relates to walking routes:

Objective RA 6 – Walking Routes/Rights of Ways
Prohibit the intrusion of development along public walking routes and public rights of way, particularly those in scenic areas, the seacoast and along inland waterways.

11.3.4.2.1 *Bearna Walking and Heritage Trails*

There are no designated walking routes or heritage trails within or around the study area. The closest walking trail is Bearna Woods, which are approximately 5km east at its nearest point to the proposed site. The closest heritage trail to the proposed site boundary is the Maigh Cuilinn Heritage Trail approximately 9.5km northwest in Moycullen and there is no visibility of the proposed development anticipated from either of these trails.

11.3.4.2.2 *Cycling Routes*

The Wild Atlantic Way forms part of the R336, approximately 138m south of the proposed site boundary. The next closest cycling route for County Galway is the Derrouira Mountain Bike trail approximately 28km north-west of the proposed site boundary.

11.4 **Landscape Character of the Proposed Development Site**

11.4.1 **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.

11.4.1.1 Topography and Landform

The topographical landform of the LVIA Study area and the wider landscape is shown in Plate 11-1, Plate 11-2 and Figure 11-10 below. In general, the site is quite steeply graded from the north (+24.0m AOD) to the southeast (+14.5m AOD), with levels along the western boundary typically +22.5m AOD to +15.1m AOD. The Trusky stream is immediately east of the site’s boundary, which is similarly steeply graded, from north to south. Plate 11-1 shows the existing site topography, taken from the Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate looking southeast.



Plate 11-1: View of the existing site topography.

Plate 11- 2 was taken north-east of the proposed site boundary off the L-5384, demonstrating the local topography, as the landscape slopes down towards the south-east.



Plate 11-2: View of topography in the wider landscape setting.

The elevated landscape north of the site boundary allows for distant views of the North Clare Coast and the sea. Due to the elevated position north of the proposed site boundary and screening by mature vegetation throughout much of the surrounding landscape, views towards the proposed site from the surrounding local roads will not be visible within much of the LVIA study area.

The proposed site is delineated in red in Figure 11-8 below. The site topography slopes steeply down from the north to the southwest. The map shown in Figure 11- 8 shows that the site is located on elevated lands north of Bearna.

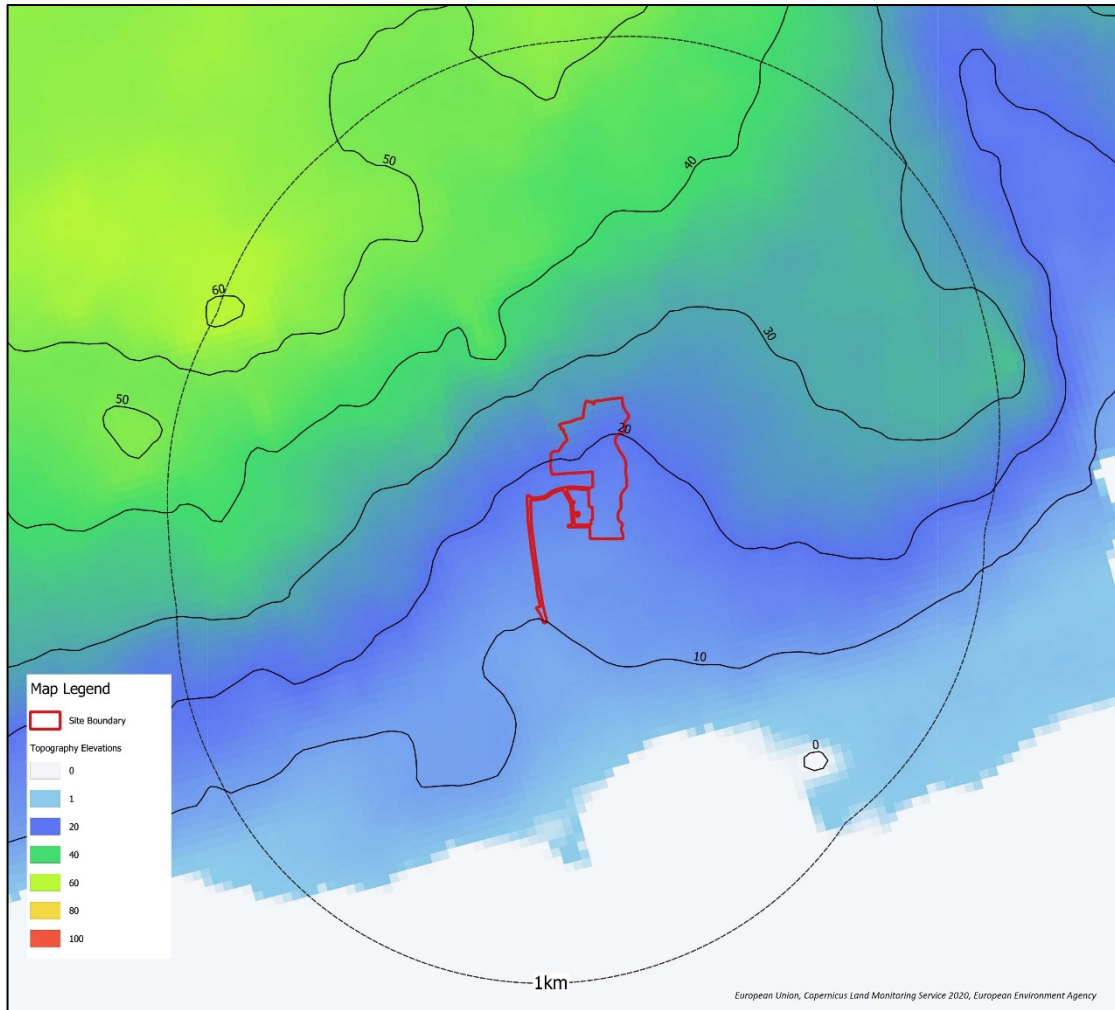


Figure 11-8: Topography of the existing site

11.4.1.2 Drainage

The Trusky Stream forms the eastern boundary of the proposed development and the riparian zone along the stream comprises wet grasses, rushes and bracken. All surface water runoff, on the existing site, currently infiltrates to the natural ground or discharges to the Trusky Stream, which in turn discharges to sea at Galway Bay, approximately 690m south from the proposed development. The majority of rainfall discharges via shallow subsurface flow to the Trusky Stream.

The key sensitive receptor from and water and hydrogeology perspective is the Trusky Stream. The potential for impacts on the bedrock aquifer are limited however mitigation measures have been developed to protect the aquifer as well as the surface water receptor. Information for the site hydrology and drainage can be found in Chapter 8 of this report.

11.4.1.3 Landcover

Landcover is the term used to describe the combination of vegetation, buildings and hard surfaces that cover the land. It comprises the more detailed constituent parts of the landscape and encompasses both natural and man-made features.

The development site is currently being used as rough grazing agriculture. The primary landcover of the site is a mixture of Spoil and Bare Ground, with sections consisting of Dry Humid Acid Grassland, Scrub and Dense Bracken. As shown in Plate 11- 3 below, this view was taken from the eastern boundary of the Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate looking northeast into the proposed site. The landscape

is primarily flat, characterised by low-lying shrubs, occasional single-strand trees and pockets of scrub. Stone walls approximately 1 metre in height form field boundaries that are evident throughout the existing landscape. The main access gate to the site is through the Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate, which can be accessed off the L-1321 north of the R336 (Bearna road).



Plate 11-3: View of proposed site looking northeast from Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate.



Plate 11-4: View of land cover surrounding the existing site.

Plate 11- 4 (above) was taken from the L-5384 that runs east from the proposed site boundary, looking southwest towards the site. The view in Plate 11- 4 also shows the extent of vegetation found throughout much of the existing site area. Overgrown vegetation along stone walls, pockets of scrub and grazed agricultural grassland characterise much of this image. There are no livestock found within the site. Views of the Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate can be seen on the left side of the image in the background.

There is mixed landcover in other areas of the LVIA study area. Most areas surrounding the site are dominated by the built form of roads, residential housing and commercial buildings.

Bearna Woods is located to the northeast end of the LVIA study area, a forest dominated by broadleaf trees. To the north, northeast, and east, landcover comprises of gently rolling grazed agricultural grass fields lined by stone walls and extensive clusters of low-lying shrubs and scrub. The lower slopes of the elevated land to the south of the site is dominated by grazed grassland and scrub. Further southwards include residential development and the R336 (Bearna road). Residential clusters and one-off housing are scattered throughout much of the study area.

11.4.1.4 Land Use

The current land-use on the existing site comprises of rough grazing agriculture, as shown in Plate 11- 4. The site is bounded by improved agricultural grassland to the north and east and residential housing to the west and south.

Other natural elements including the Trusky Stream is located along the eastern site boundary. Stone walls approximately 1 metre in height, form field boundaries and are evident throughout much of the site boundary and study area.

The land-use surrounding the site can best be described as built infrastructure comprising of a mix of commercial and residential buildings. The commercial buildings are located in the south of the LVIA

study area along the R336 (Bearna road) in the Village of Bearna, and include retail units, cafes, restaurants, pubs and places of work for local services. There are several modern residential developments scattered throughout much of the study area, including An Leac Lian and Thornberry in the southwest, and Cnoc Fraoigh Housing Estate in the west. Other residential dwellings can be found scattered throughout the study area.

The Village of Bearna is serviced by a network of roads linking to the R336 (Bearna road), which is the main transport route that directly leads into the City of Galway. Following the L-1321 local road west of the site boundary through the R336 (Bearna road), the road turns into Pier Road and directly leads to the Bearna waterfront. The Village of Bearna waterfront services several pubs and restaurants for Bearna locals and visitors from Galway City.

11.4.2 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 proposed development site and study area. These, combined with susceptibility, contribute to the assessment of landscape sensitivity.

Table 11-16: Features of Landscape Value

Feature	Description
Landscape Designations	<p>The proposed development site is zoned as ‘Residential Phase 1’ (R) and ‘Open Space/Recreation and Amenity’ (OS) in the Bearna Local Area Plan.</p> <p>There are two GCPD designated ‘Focal Points and Views’ within the study area, but none directly pertaining to the site. Distant views north of the proposed site of <i>North Clare Coast</i> (V74) and <i>Views of the sea from north of Bearna</i> (V72) will be screened due to local topography and screening by local mature vegetation and will therefore not be impacted.</p> <p>The proposed development site is located in LCA 9-<i>Inervan to Galway City coastline</i>, which is assigned as High landscape value and Medium sensitivity.</p>
Landscape Elements Quality/Condition	<p>This refers to the physical state of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.</p> <p>The landscape of the proposed site is regarded as modified by man in terms of the rough grazed agricultural land and the inclusion of local electrical infrastructure. Mature trees, hedges, scrub and other natural elements of the site are mainly limited to the eastern site boundary along the Trusky Stream.</p> <p>Areas immediately surrounding the site are dominated by rough grazing agricultural land and the built form of residential and commercial developments.</p>
Aesthetic Qualities	<p>From the elevated land north of the proposed site boundary there are open and expansive views towards the sea and North Clare Coast to the south.</p>

	Designated <i>View 72- View of the sea from north of Bearna</i> and <i>View 74- View of North Clare Coast</i> can be slightly seen north of the proposed site boundary between pockets of mature vegetation along the L-1321 and L-5384. Views north of the site looking south-west towards the North Clare Coast (Designated View 74) are mostly screened by buildings and mature vegetation. While the site is a green backdrop to the more urban parts of Bearna, the grassland is degraded and of low aesthetic value.
Wildness/naturalness	The existing Trusky Stream along the eastern site boundary, as well as pockets of mature trees and shrubs dotted throughout the site contribute to a sense of naturalness. However, due to the agricultural use of the site overall there is very little in terms of wildness or naturalness.
Rarity/Conservation Interests	There is no Rarity/Conservation Interests on the development site.
Cultural Meaning/Associations	No cultural associations were found in relation to the site. See the Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Assessment for details.
Recreation Value	The site itself is privately owned and not used for any public recreational activities. There are no recreational routes pertaining to the site itself or immediately adjacent to the site. The closest amenity trail is the Maigh Cuilinn Heritage Trail- Killagoola Loop Walk approximately 9.5km northwest from the site boundary.

Galway County Development Plan affords the landscape in which the site is located with a high landscape value and medium landscape sensitivity. However, the proposed development site is located in the Village of Bearna and zoned as ‘Phase 1 Residential’ and ‘Open Space/Recreation and Amenity’ in the Bearna Plan. It is assumed that the landscape values and sensitivity apply to the landscape character area as a whole and may not be applicable to an area within the core of the Village of Bearna.

From a landscape perspective, the aesthetic qualities of the site are not unique and there are no rare landscape features present. However, the views to the south, part of the GCDP Designated Scenic View 72 and View 74 are within the LVIA study area. The proposed development site is located within designated Scenic *View 72: Views of the sea from north of Bearna* but no change in the view is foreseen from the proposed development. Visibility towards the proposed site is most evident to the east and west adjacent to the site boundary and not in the direction of Designated View 72 (south, south-west and south-west). Other than the GCDP Designated Scenic Views, there are no other aesthetic qualities pertaining to the site.

The site is materially impacted by manmade interventions in the landscape such as agricultural use, electrical grid infrastructure and surrounding infrastructure developments, it is not perceived as a wild or natural environment and many other very similar examples of its kind exist in the wider landscape. There are no cultural or heritage associations attached to the site and it currently holds no public recreational value. The relatively de-graded condition of the site and perception of dis-use decreases its perceived landscape value.

On the grounds of the aforementioned points and taking the landscape policies, landscape character assessment and zoning designations of the GCDP and Bearna Plan into account, the local landscape value and sensitivity are both considered **Medium to High**.

11.5.1 Views towards the site

A site visit was conducted by a landscape architect in July 2020. During this visit, visibility of the proposed development site was assessed from a variety of locations within the LVIA study area and informed the selection of viewpoint locations for assessing visual effects via a photomontage assessment methodology (see Section 11.6.3).

During viewpoint selection, visibility was also appraised from the roads in the 1km LVIA study area of the site. During the site visit, the R336 (Bearna road), L-1321, L-5384 as well as several local roads in the immediate vicinity to the site, were assessed for their visibility towards the proposed site. Other roads from within the 1km LVIA study area were deemed to have limited to no visibility due to the screening provided by the built environment and mature tree lines which obscure views towards the site.

After the site visit, it was concluded that most of the views towards the proposed site were predominantly available from the R336 (Bearna road), as well as the Scach na Mara Housing Estate and the L-1321 and L-5384 running parallel on the western and eastern site boundary, for which viewpoint locations have been selected, which are listed in Table 1-8 below. In other areas visibility was found to be very limited.

Plate 11-5 below was taken along the R336 (Bearna road) in front of a shopfront, looking north-east towards the L-1321 and proposed site. The photo was taken approximately 140 metres from the south-eastern corner of the proposed development site. The proposed development is located in the centre background of this image. The image shows there will be very limited visibility of the proposed development from this location due to the presence of screening by mature vegetation in the foreground and midground.



Plate 11-5: View towards the proposed site from the R336 (Bearna road).

Plate 11- 6 shows a view towards the site and is within Designated *Scenic View 72- View of sea from north of Bearna* looking southeast from the L-1321 northwest of the site. Distant views of the sea and the North Clare Coast can be seen along the skyline. The proposed development site is located just off the L-1321 in the centre of the image but is significantly screened by intervening landform and mature vegetation, and therefore visibility anticipated from this view is limited.



Plate 11-6: View from the L-1321 north-west of the site boundary, Designated Scenic View 72 (GCDP 2015-2021).

Plate 11- 7 below shows the view from the L-5384 local road north of the site, located within the Designated Scenic *View 74- View of North Clare Coast*, approximately 0.9km north of the site boundary. The view looks southeast towards the proposed site, located in the centre of the image. Along the L-5384 from where this image was taken is adjacent to a row of residential properties. Visibility anticipated from this view will be minor, as much of the proposed development site will be screened by mature vegetation found throughout much of the study area.



Plate 11-7: View from L-5384 north of site, Designated Scenic View 74- View of North Clare Coast (GCDP 2015-2021).

The site visit determined that potential visibility of the proposed development will be highly localised. Visibility of the development will be greatest in locations proximate to the western and south-eastern boundary of the site.

11.5.2 Viewpoint Locations

A total of 9 viewpoint locations were selected for use in the photomontage assessment of visual effects. The viewpoint locations are briefly described in Table 11-8 below and are shown in Figure 11- 9 below. Views and visibility from these locations are described and assessed in greater depth in the sections to follow. It is important to note that photomontages are tools to assist the visual assessment and do not represent all views of the proposed development from surrounding areas, in most cases the viewpoints were selected for their open and unobstructed view of the proposed development site.

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. Choice of viewpoint locations aimed to incorporate prominent visual receptors where there is likely to be either a high residential receptors or regular motor traffic (e.g. R336 Bearna Road).

The choice of viewpoint locations should cover locations where the development will be completely visible as well as partially visible and the choice of viewpoint locations in this instance did so.



Figure 11-9: Photomontage Viewpoint Locations

Table 11-17: Photomontage Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint	Description	Grid Ref. (ITM)
01	View taken along the L-5384 local road north of the R336 (Bearna road) approximately 307 metres west of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Knockaunnacarragh and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,613 N: 723,581
02	View taken from the Scath Na Mara residential development estate, off the L-5384 approximately 165 metres east of the proposed site boundary, in the townland of Trusky East and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,445 N: 723,265
03	View taken from the R336 (Bearna road, Wild Atlantic Way) looking north-west towards the proposed site approximately 320 metres from the proposed site boundary, in the townland of Freeport County Galway.	E: 523,375 N: 722,991

Viewpoint	Description	Grid Ref. (ITM)
04	View taken along the L-1321 local road at the entrance to the Cnoc Fraoigh housing estate complex, located within the western site boundary in the townland of Trusky West and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,026 N: 723,414
05	View taken along the L-1321 local road approximately 60 metres west of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Trucky West and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,030 N: 723,556
06	View was taken from the L-1321 north of the R336 (Bearna road) within the proposed red line boundary in the townland of Trusky West, County Galway.	E: 523,062 N: 723,077
07	View taken from the L-1321 approximately 230 metres north-west of the proposed red line boundary in the townland of Trusky East, County Galway.	E: 523,084 N: 723,889
08	View taken from the L-5384 approximately 440 metres north-east of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Trusky East and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,619 N: 723,980
09	View taken along the L-5384 local road approximately 600 metres north-east of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Ballard West and <i>Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway.</i>	E: 523,621 N: 724,187

11.5.3 Viewpoint Assessment

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 the viewpoints below are long term and direct effects.

11.5.3.1 Viewpoint 01



Plate 11-8: Viewpoint 01 Existing View



Plate 11-9: Viewpoint 01 Proposed View

11.5.3.1.1 Viewpoint 01 – Existing View

This view was taken along the L-5384 local road north of the R336 (Bearna road) approximately 307 metres west of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Knockaunnacarragh and *Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna*, County Galway. This road is used by local residents.

This view looks south-west along the L-5384 local road towards an open field. The field in the foreground is mostly screened by a row of vegetation running parallel along the road from where this image was taken. The road is lined by pavements followed by rows of shrubs. Views are restricted short to medium-distance due to the presence of vegetation in the foreground and medium to long-distance views towards the background above the row of vegetation. The character of this view is rural in nature. The visual receptors are local residents looking east towards the Proposed Development. The sensitivity and susceptibility to change is considered high as the receptor will experience this view on a daily basis.

This viewpoint is located along *Designated View 72- View of sea from North of Bearna*. The visual receptors are local residents looking west towards the Proposed Development. The sensitivity and susceptibility to change is considered high as the receptor will experience this view on a daily basis. Therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Low**.

11.5.3.1.2 Viewpoint 01 – Proposed View

The proposed view shows the proposed two-storey buildings substantially screened by the vegetation in the foreground. Some of the upper parts of the proposed buildings can be seen above the shrub line in the centre midground of the image. The skyline will be in alignment with the existing vegetation in the foreground of the view and the short to medium-distance view will not be affected. The spatial extent of the proposed development within the view is Low. The building scale and style of the proposed development is in keeping with the surrounding residential developments in Bearna. The addition of this new, more urban element to the view will affect the existing rural character of the view slightly. However, this altered character is in keeping with the general character of the area and the zoning designation for Residential Phase 1 and Open Space/Recreation and Amenity of the Bearna Plan.

Although a slight change in landscape character is foreseen from the proposed development, the horizontal and vertical extent of the proposed development in this view is restricted, therefore the overall magnitude of change is deemed to be Low. The proposed development aligns with the

character and aesthetic of the surrounding semi-urban landscape and the ‘R’/‘OS’ designation in the Bearna Plan, therefore visual effects are deemed to be Low. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Slight Neutral**.

11.5.3.2 Viewpoint 02



Plate 11-10: Viewpoint 02 – Existing View



Plate 11-11: Viewpoint 02 – Proposed View

11.5.3.2.1 Viewpoint 02 – Existing View

View taken from the Scath Na Mara residential development estate, off the L-5384 north of the R336 (Bearna road) approximately 165 metres east of the proposed site boundary, in the townland of Trusky East and *Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna*, County Galway.

The view looks northwest towards an open field. In the foreground, a residential dwelling can be seen on the right side of the image. A stone wall, approximately 1 metre in height runs parallel along the road from where this image was taken. Behind this, private gardens with shrub plantings can be seen. Several other residential dwellings are dotted throughout the midground and background of this view. The upper parts of a cluster of deciduous trees located at the southern extent of the proposed development

site can be seen as a prominent feature in the midground of the view. The overall perception of this view is of a semi-rural, suburban landscape character.

The most prominent visual receptors includes local residents from this housing area and motorised traffic, as well as viewers of *Designated View 72- View of sea from North of Bearna*, but residents living in dwellings adjacent to the proposed site are also included. This view, however, is directed northwest and not in the direction of the Designated view 72 (views south-east, south and south-west. Therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.2 *Viewpoint 02 – Proposed View*

The proposed view shows the rear of the proposed two-storey buildings substantially screened by the row of vegetation in the midground. The building tops of the proposed development run parallel with the existing vegetation and residential dwellings in the midground and background of this view. The introduction of the proposed buildings will result in the skyline being slightly raised between the small gap through the existing vegetation on the left side of the image.

The proposed development will not give rise to any built- form development in a substantial way from this view, as the proposed development is in keeping with the existing surrounding landscape character. The horizontal and vertical extent is deemed to be Low from this view, therefore the overall magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low**. The proposed development aligns with the character and aesthetic of the semi-urban landscape evident in the surrounding areas and the ‘R’/‘OS’ designation for the Bearna Plan, therefore visual effects are deemed to be **Low**. Therefore, visual effects are deemed to be Low. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Not Significant Neutral**.

11.5.3.3 *Viewpoint 03*



Plate 11-12: Viewpoint 03 – Existing View



Plate 11-13: Viewpoint 03 – Proposed View

11.5.3.3.1 *Viewpoint 03 – Existing View*

This view was taken from the R336 (Bearna road, Wild Atlantic Way) looking north-west towards the proposed site in the townland of Freeport, approximately 320 metres from the proposed site boundary. This viewpoint was selected as it is representative of several residential visual receptors and is within the *Designated View 72- View of the sea from north of Bearna*.

The view is looking northwest from the R336 (Bearna road) towards the site in the background. The road is lined by pavements and residential properties on either side. Across the road in the foreground, a low stone wall separates the road from the residential properties behind. The residential properties are characterised with gardens and mature trees. Beyond this, rooftops of one-off housing can be seen interspersed amongst deciduous treetops, which will predominantly screen views from this location. The character of the landscape in this view is predominantly semi-urban and rural in nature.

The viewpoint is representative of several visual receptors including local residents and motorised traffic along the R336 (Bearna road), as well as viewers of *Designated View 72- View of sea from North of Bearna*, but residents living in dwellings adjacent to the road are also included. This view, however, is directed north and not in the direction of the Designated view 72 (views south-east, south and south-west). Therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Low-Medium**.

11.5.3.3.2 *Viewpoint 03 – Proposed View*

The proposed view (Plate 11- 13) shows the skyline of the proposed development infrastructure, which will be located behind the existing building in the centre view, delineated in red. The majority of the proposed development will be screened by the houses and vegetation in the foreground and middle ground of this view. No visibility of the proposed development is anticipated from this location due to screening by the built and natural environment.

No change to this view is anticipated from the proposed development. From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low** and the likely visual effects are considered **Low**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Imperceptible Neutral**.

11.5.3.4 Viewpoint 04



Plate 11-14: Viewpoint 04 – Existing View



Plate 11-15: Viewpoint 04 – Proposed View

11.5.3.4.1 Viewpoint 04 – Existing View

View taken along the L-1321 local road at the entrance to the Cnoc Fraoigh housing estate complex, located within the western site boundary in the townland of Trusky West and *Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna, County Galway*.

The view is looking from the L-1321 directly east towards Cnoc Fraoigh and the proposed development site in the background. The Cnoc Fraoigh housing estate can be seen in this view, where pavements, stone walls, residential boulevards lined by street trees, and small gardens in front of two-storey detached housing can be seen. Views are restricted to medium-distance within the housing estate. The character of this view is suburban/semi-rural in nature.

Visual receptors will be pedestrians and motorised traffic as well residents within the Cnoc Fraoigh adjacent to the proposed site development. Views of the sea are not foreseen from this location and will therefore not give rise to any impacts of designated View 72. Therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.4.2 **Viewpoint 04 – Proposed View**

The proposed view shows the front of the proposed two-storey buildings substantially screened by the Cnoc Fraoigh houses in the foreground. Medium-distance views will be slightly impacted on the left side of this image as the proposed development will be seen between the spaces of the existing residential buildings and vegetation in the midground. Some of the upper parts of the proposed building can be seen above the rooves of the houses in the centre background of the image. The skyline of this view will be in alignment with the existing houses and the short to medium-distance view will not be affected.

The spatial extent of the proposed development within the view is Low and the increase in roof height of the proposed building is moderate adjacent the existing roof heights. The addition of this new element in this view will not impact the existing residential character as the proposed development is in keeping with the existing residential character in the wider landscape and the zoning designation ‘R’ in the Bearna Plan. Designated View 72 does not have any foreseen impacts arising from the proposed development and will therefore not be impacted as a result of the proposed development.

From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Medium** and the likely visual effects are considered **Medium**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Moderate Neutral**.

11.5.3.5 **Viewpoint 05**



Plate 11-16: Viewpoint 05 – Existing View



Plate 11-17: Viewpoint 05 – Proposed View

11.5.3.5.1 *Viewpoint 05 – Existing View*

View taken along the L-1321 local road north of the R336 (Bearna road) approximately 60 metres west of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Trusky West. This viewpoint was selected as it is representative of several residential visual receptors and is within the *Designated View 72- View of the sea from north of Bearna*.

This view looks northeast along the L-1321 local road north of the R336 towards an open field. The field is mostly screened by a row of vegetation in the foreground running parallel along the road from where this image was taken. The road is lined by a stone wall and electricity powerlines. The stone wall in the foreground comprises of overgrown vegetation. Beyond this, small shrubs and mature trees are dotted throughout the field. Views are restricted to short-distance due to the presence of vegetation in the foreground and medium-distance views between the gaps of vegetation in the foreground. The character of this view is rural in nature.

Visual receptors will be local residents and motorised traffic, as well as viewers of *Designated View 72- View of sea from North of Bearna*. This view, however, is directed east and not in the direction of the Designated view 72 (views south-east, south and south-west). Therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.5.2 *Viewpoint 05 – Proposed View*

The proposed view shows the proposed two-storey buildings substantially screened by the vegetation in the foreground. Some of the upper parts of the proposed buildings can be seen above the shrub line in the centre midground of the image between the gaps in the vegetation. The skyline of this view will be in alignment with the existing vegetation and the short to medium-distance view will not be affected. The spatial extent of the proposed development within the view is Low and the increase in roof height of the proposed buildings are moderate adjacent the existing vegetation heights in the surrounding landscape. The building scale and style of the proposed development is in keeping with policy UD1 and the surrounding residential building characters in the wider landscape. The addition of this new, more urban element to the view will affect the character of the view slightly. However, this altered character is in keeping with the general character of the area and the zoning designation for Residential Phase 1 and Open Space/Recreation and Amenity of the Bearna Plan.

Although a slight change in landscape character is foreseen from the proposed development, the horizontal and vertical extent of the proposed development in this view is restricted, therefore the overall magnitude of change is deemed to be **Medium**. The proposed development aligns with the

character and aesthetic of the surrounding semi-urban landscape and the ‘R’/OS’ designations in the Bearna Plan, therefore the significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Moderate Adverse**.

11.5.3.6 Viewpoint 06



Plate 11-18: Viewpoint 06 – Existing View



Plate 11-19: Viewpoint 06 – Proposed View

11.5.3.6.1 Viewpoint 06 – Existing View

This view was taken from the L-1321 north of the R336 (Bearna road) within the proposed red line boundary in the townland of Trusky West.

The view shows a road lined by concrete footings on the left and overgrown vegetation on the right. A small metal fence is seen on the left side of the image in the foreground. Beyond this and towards the centre of the image, overgrown trees and shrubs outline the road that runs into the background of this view. Electricity powerlines are seen scattered throughout the midground of the view. Views towards the proposed site from this location will be screened by the existing mature vegetation in the foreground. The overall character of the view is rural in nature.

The most prominent visual receptors from this viewpoint location are the pedestrians and local road users, therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Low**.

11.5.3.6.2 *Viewpoint 06 – Proposed View*

The proposed view shows the skyline of the proposed development infrastructure, which will be located behind the existing row of dense mature vegetation, delineated in red. The majority of the proposed development will be screened by the vegetation in the foreground and middle ground of this view. No visibility of the proposed development is anticipated from this location due to screening by the natural environment.

No change to this view is anticipated from the proposed development. From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low** and the likely visual effects are considered **Low**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Imperceptible Neutral**.

11.5.3.7 *Viewpoint 07*



Plate 11-20: Viewpoint 07 – Existing View



Plate 11-21: Viewpoint 07 – Proposed View

11.5.3.7.1 *Viewpoint 07 – Existing View*

This view was taken from the L-1321 approximately 230 metres northwest of the proposed red line boundary in the townland of Trusky East, County Galway.

The view was taken along the L-1321 local road in front of a row of residential dwellings. The road slopes in a downward direction to the south. The foreground of this view comprises of two stone walls running parallel along the road from where the image was taken. The right side of the image shows a small garden located in front of a residential property. The left side of the view comprises of a semi-open field, mainly covered with pockets of shrub and mature trees. Electrical powerlines run parallel along the road and extend into the background of this view. A single residential dwelling is located in the background of this view and is somewhat covered by the existing vegetation in the foreground. All other parts of the site are screened from view due to the existing mature vegetation. The overall character of the view is rural in nature.

The most prominent visual receptors from this viewpoint location are the local residents, therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.7.2 *Viewpoint 07 – Proposed View*

The proposed view (Plate 11-21) shows the skyline of the proposed development infrastructure, which will be located behind the existing mature vegetation in the foreground. The majority of the proposed development will be screened by the vegetation in the foreground and middle ground of this view. A tiny portion of the proposed development is viewed through the gap between the mature trees on the left side of the view. Skyline views of the North Clare Coast can be seen but are substantially screened by the vegetation in the background.

From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low** and the likely visual effects are considered **Low**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Imperceptible Neutral**.

11.5.3.8 *Viewpoint 08*



Plate 11-22: Viewpoint 08 – Existing View



Plate 11-23: Viewpoint 08 – Proposed View

11.5.3.8.1 *Viewpoint 08 – Existing View*

This view was taken from the L-5384 north of the R336 approximately 440 metres north-east of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Trusky East and *Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna*.

The road from where this image was taken is outlined by mature overgrown vegetation on either side. Small sections of a stone wall can be seen along the road in the centre midground of this view. A small road is seen in the foreground which joins the road where this view is located. Beyond the road, mature trees and shrubs are seen throughout much of the midground and background. There are slight views of grazed fields located between the pockets of the mature vegetation in the centre of the image. Electricity powerlines are scattered throughout much of the midground of this view. All other parts of the site are screened from view. Skyline views of the North Clare Coast can be slightly seen along the skyline but are substantially screened by the vegetation in the foreground. The character of this view is rural in nature.

The most prominent visual receptors from this viewpoint location are the local residents, as well as users of Designated Scenic View 72 therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.8.2 *Viewpoint 08 – Proposed View*

The proposed view shows the skyline of the proposed development infrastructure, which will be located behind the existing mature vegetation in the foreground of the view, delineated in red. The majority of the proposed development will be screened by the vegetation found in the foreground and middle ground of this view. Screening by intervening topography and mature vegetation will limit any view of the proposed development site from this location. Designated Scenic View 72 (view of sea from north of Bearna) will not be impacted as screening by mature vegetation will limit views of the proposed development from this location.

No change to this view is anticipated from the proposed development. From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low** and the likely visual effects are considered **Low**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Imperceptible Neutral**.

11.5.3.9 Viewpoint 09



Plate 11-24: Viewpoint 09 – Existing View



Plate 11-25: Viewpoint 09 – Proposed View

11.5.3.9.1 Viewpoint 09 – Existing View

This view was taken in front of a residential dwelling located along the L-5384 local road north of the R336 (Bearna road) approximately 600 metres north-east of the proposed site boundary in the townland of Ballard West and *Designated Scenic View 72- View of the Sea from north of Bearna*.

The foreground of this view comprises of a stone wall approximately 1 metre in height located on the left side of this image. The stone wall separates the road to the residential dwelling located just behind. Behind this and running parallel along the left side of the road, electrical powerlines are seen. Overgrown hedgerows and pockets of mature trees are dominant throughout much of the foreground and midground of this view. Distant views of the North Clare Coast are seen along the skyline but are mainly screened by the mature treeline within the midground of this view. All other parts of the site are screened by the vegetation found in the midground and background. The character of this view is rural in nature.

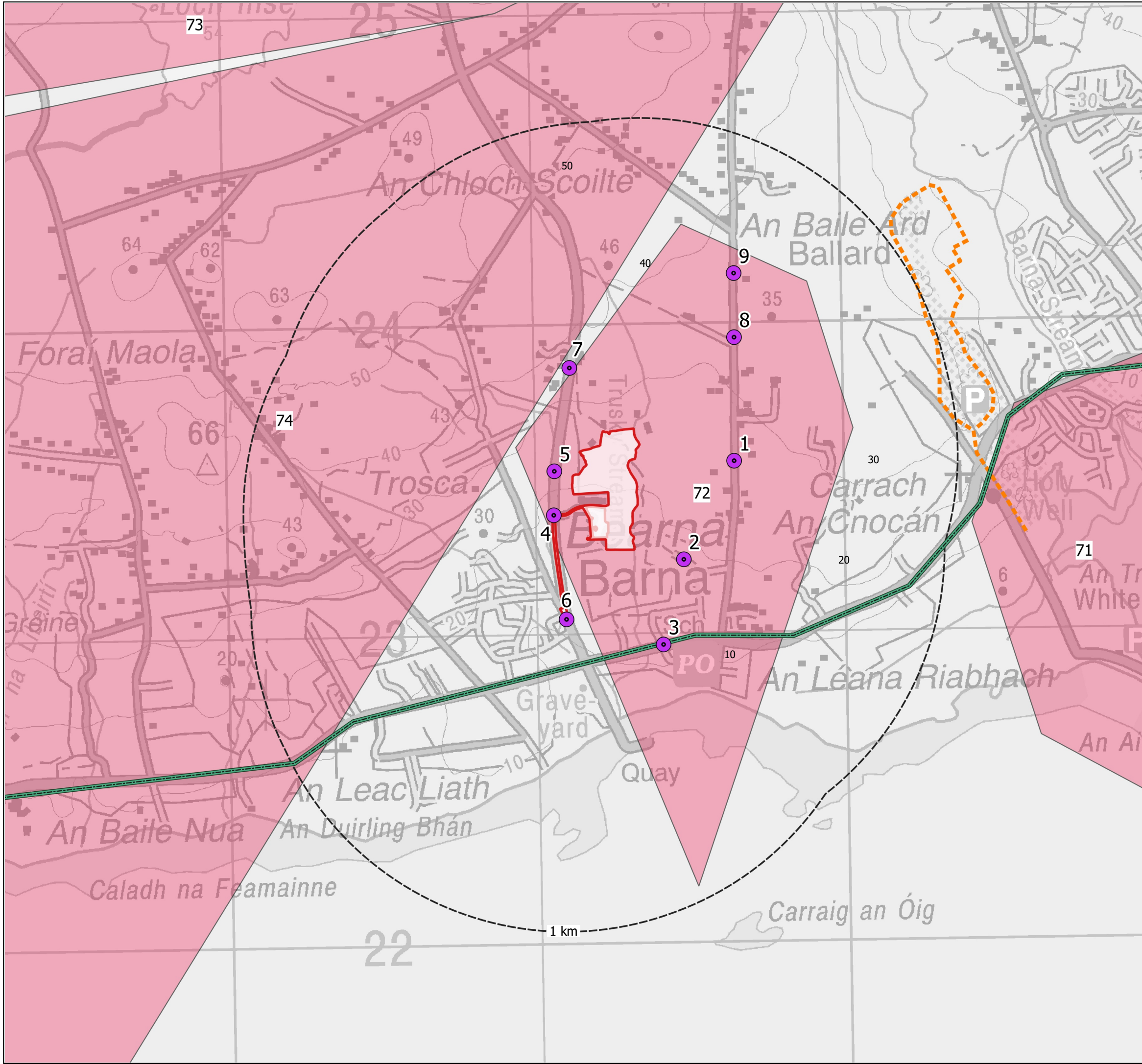
The most prominent visual receptors from this viewpoint location are the local residents, as well as users of Designated Scenic View 72 therefore, visual receptor sensitivity is considered **Medium**.

11.5.3.9.2

Viewpoint 09 – Proposed View

The proposed view shows the skyline of the proposed development infrastructure, which will be located behind the existing vegetation in the foreground and midground, as delineated in red. The majority of the proposed development will be screened by the vegetation in the foreground and middle ground of this view. Designated Scenic View 72- View of sea from north of Bearna will not be impacted as a result of the proposed development as the proposed development will be screened entirely by the existing vegetation.

From this viewpoint the magnitude of change is deemed to be **Low** and the likely visual effects are considered **Low**. The significance of visual effects is therefore considered **Imperceptible Neutral**.



Map Legend

- Site Boundary
- Co. Galway Focal Points and Views
- Bearn Woods Walking Trails
- The Wild Atlantic Way - Tourist Route
- Photo Locations



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Drawing Title
Landscape Designations

Project Title
Burkeway Barna Strategic Housing Development

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11.6 Likely and Significant Effects and Associated Mitigation Measures

11.6.1 ‘Do Nothing’ Scenario

If the proposed development was not to proceed, the opportunity to develop 121 no. units comprising a mixture of houses, duplexes and apartments, childcare facility, open space, landscaping and ancillary works at this long standing zoned residential site would be lost. Similarly, the provision of a public linear park along Trusky Stream on lands zoned Open Spaces/Recreation and Amenity would be lost. Under the “Do Nothing” alternative, the zoned residential lands would not be used for the development of housing and the site would continue to be used as agricultural land.

There remains a long-standing housing need in Bearna and in Galway City in general as identified in the Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021. Therefore, under this scenario the construction of needed housing would have to occur on another site in the Bearna area to fulfil that need. It is possible that any other site would be less suitable than the proposed development site and would potentially put pressure on the use of lands not currently zoned residential or serviced with utilities. For this reason, the “Do-Nothing” alternative was not considered the appropriate option. There would be no landscape or visual effects associated with the “Do Nothing” alternative.

11.6.2 Construction Phase Effects

Areas experiencing landscape and visual effects during the construction stage will vary, depending on the active construction phase. The majority of construction works will be experienced locally from receptors located in adjacent residences or street network facing the construction site.

Construction effects will result in:

- Potential effects to landscape character or visual amenity within the locality or the wider study area as a result of the visibility of construction activities such as site clearance works, the construction of buildings, streets and utility infrastructure, scaffolding and tall equipment such as cranes and containers.
- Effects of temporary site infrastructure such as site traffic and construction compounds especially those located in areas adjacent to sensitive landscape and visual receptors.
- Potential physical effects arising from construction of the development and in particular on the landscape resource within the site area.

The highest landscape and visual effects during the construction stage will be experienced in the vicinity of the development site, from locations with open or partial views of the proposed development site and along the roads where construction traffic will travel. Principal views of construction works will likely be experienced within a radius of approximately 250m from the boundary of the site to the south and east, towards Bearna Village. Tall machinery such as cranes will likely be visible in the wider study area and beyond. Existing intervening vegetation and landform will partially screen the site clearance, earthworks, compound, construction works and the associated machines moving on the construction site. Landscape and visual effects relating to the removal of vegetation during site clearance and earthworks will be permanent.

The landscape and visual effects and their significance at construction stage will be short term, adverse and range from Not Significant to Slight adverse in the wider study area and Moderate adverse for areas in close proximity, up to approximately 450m radius from the boundary of the proposed development site, where intervening existing vegetation and built structures do not screen views of the proposed development site.

11.6.3 Operational Phase Effects

11.6.3.1 Predicted Effects on Landscape

During the desktop study, landscape designations set out in the Galway County Council Development Plan 2015-2021 in the form of focal points and views (see Figure 11- 6 in Section 13.4.2.1 above), and landscape value and sensitivity (see Figure 11- 4 and Figure 11- 5) were identified within 1 kilometre of the proposed development site. Table 11-5 assessed the value and sensitivity of the site and the LVIA study area against a variety of landscape criteria in order to establish an overall sensitivity and value rating applicable and relevant to this LVIA. In conclusion, landscape value and Landscape Sensitivity was classed as Medium-High.

There are no designated focal points or views pertaining directly to the proposed site. However, two focal points and views (Designated View 72- view of sea from north of Bearna and View 44- view of North Clare Coast) are located within the 1-kilometre LVIA study area, but neither will be affected by the proposed development due to the presence of intervening topography and mature vegetation within the wider landscape.

The proposed site falls within the landscape character area of *LCA 9 - Inveran to Galway City Coastline*, which is assigned a medium landscape sensitivity and a high landscape value.

In terms of the urban design and landscape policy set out in the Bearna Plan, the proposed development complies with Objective UD1 and Objectives LU2, and LU4 in terms of scale and quality of the urban design, size and orientation of the buildings and the siting adjacent to the civic and commercial core of Bearna.

The proposed development is bordered in all directions by residential developments and agricultural land uses. Construction of the proposed development will be congruent with the landscape character represented by the zoning designations Residential Phase 1 (R) and Open Space/Amenity (OS) zoning in the Bearna Plan in which the site is located.

The magnitude of change in the landscape arising as a result of the proposed development is considered to be Moderate in localised areas around the site. The magnitude of change in the landscape of the wider study area (LVIA study area to 1 km) as a whole is deemed to be Negligible.

Overall, the predicted likely effects on landscape attributed to the proposed development are considered to be **Slight**. Any landscape effects likely to arise will be localised and the nature of the development is in keeping with the surrounding urban landscape.

11.6.3.1.1 Significance of Effect

The landscape sensitivity is considered Medium in accordance with the GCDP sensitivity rating and the magnitude of the change is considered Low.

There are some permanent changes in the character of the site and immediate vicinity, with the removal of the undulating open fields and change in topography of the site. In turning what was a rural area on the edge of the city into suburban area will have a slight effect on the character and fabric of the site and immediate vicinity. However, the effect will be relatively localised and is not likely to have significant effects on the landscape character of the wider area as the proposed development is in keeping with the style and scale of the surrounding suburban character.

The construction of the proposed residential development, which is residentially zoned, is in keeping with the objectives set out in the Bearna Plan.

The Trusky Stream, as well as some trees and hedgerows will be retained and integrated into the public linear park that forms part of the proposed development and in other areas new planting and features are proposed (see Figure 11-1 and the landscape plan), which are of environmental as well as aesthetic benefit.

Overall, the predicted landscape impact is considered to be Permanent, **Slight**, as a result of the level of screening provided, however the overall character of the area will be slightly affected.

11.6.3.1.2 *Proposed Mitigation Measures*

Mitigation and avoidance measures have been integral in the design of the proposed development, and these will assist in reducing the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The mitigation measures outlined in Section 7 of the landscape plan identify several biodiversity, ecological and mitigation measures to be implemented into the proposed design. Some of these features include the introduction of a wildflower meadow to encourage biodiversity and create a micro-climate atmosphere. The landscape plan also outlines that the proposed development will encourage the use of native, naturalised and indigenous species throughout much of the landscaped areas. Landscape mitigation measures arising from the proposed development outlined in the landscape plan, will create a positive natural aesthetic quality to the area.

11.6.3.1.3 *Assessment of Residual Effects and their Significance*

As stated above, it is expected that immediately post-construction, the landscape effects in the site and immediate vicinity are likely to be Slight, negative effects. However once mitigation measures, particularly the additional planting, have become established in the medium to long-term landscape effects are expected to be ameliorated. While some of the landscape effects will remain negative, the proposed landscape and offsetting measures will have a neutral to positive effect as the development will be better assimilated into the landscape once the vegetation establishes. Accordingly, in the medium to long-term the landscape effects of the proposed development in the site and immediate vicinity are neutral and slight.

The residual effects of the proposed development on the wider landscape character are considered Slight and neutral. Therefore, based on the assessment above there are no significant effects at the level of the wider landscape character area.

11.6.3.2 *Predicted Visual Effects*

The desktop study, site visit and proposed development layout all inform the assessment of visual effects. During the site visit in July 2020, views towards the site from the surrounding road network as well as from other areas were assessed. Visibility of the proposed development site could be excluded from the vast majority of areas within the LVIA study area due to intervening topography and screening by mature vegetation and residential infrastructure.

Due to an abundance of significant screening factors, the proposed development will only be clearly visible from locations localised to the western and south-eastern boundary of the proposed development site along the L-1321 and L-5384. The proposed development may be partially seen from some locations north of the site due to its elevated position above the lower lying land, however visibility will be significantly mitigated by intervening screening from mature vegetation.

Nine viewpoints (see Figure 11- 9) were selected for which photomontages were prepared. Viewpoint locations were chosen for their open and possible visibility of the proposed development site. Hence, the nine photomontage viewpoints are not truly representative of all areas surrounding the site as the vast majority of the study area will have no visibility of the proposed development.

Four viewpoints are along the L-1321 local road, three along the L-5384 local road as well as one in Scath na Mara housing estate and another along the R336 (Bearna Road, Wild Atlantic Way). The selected viewpoints represent different orientations, elevations and contexts. Visual receptors were identified, and their sensitivity was classed differently for each viewpoint, i.e. Low, Medium and High. Visual receptor sensitivity was found to be Low at Viewpoint 06, Low-Medium at Viewpoint 03 and Medium at Viewpoints 01, 02, 04, 05, 07, 08 and 09.

From the perspectives of Viewpoints 04 and 05, the horizontal and vertical extent of change and overall magnitude of change occurring as a result of the proposed development is medium, therefore visual effects were deemed to be Medium for those viewpoints. There will be almost no perceptible changes in the view from Viewpoints 02, 03, 06, 07, 08 and 09 as a result of the proposed development, therefore visual effects were deemed to be Low.

There were no viewpoints deemed as having a High magnitude of change as a result of the proposed development. Viewpoints 04 and 05 will have Medium effects in the change in character to the existing landscape as a result of the proposed development. However, the proposed infrastructure development will not give rise to any significant visual effects as the proposed development is in keeping with the objective UD1 and objectives 'R'/OS' in the Bearna Plan.

The viewpoints showed that the scale and style of the buildings are similar in character to those found in the surrounding landscape. The ridgelines of the most elevated buildings in the proposed development shown in Section 11.4.1.1 were at the same level or below those of neighbouring buildings. The skyline of the proposed development was slightly raised in Viewpoints 01, and 04 but will not significantly alter or give rise to any domineering effects for these viewpoint locations.

Existing buildings and vegetation will screen the majority of the proposed development from many locations in the immediate surroundings of the site as shown in Viewpoints 02, 03, 06, 07, 08 and 09. The spatial extent of the proposed development within the views was found to be Low from Viewpoints 01, 04 and 05 and negligible from the remaining six viewpoints.

11.6.3.2.1 *Proposed Mitigation Measures*

Mitigation and avoidance measures have been integral in the design of the proposed development, and these will assist in reducing the potential visual effects of the proposed development. The mitigation measures outlined in Section 7 of the landscape plan identify several biodiversity, ecological and mitigation measures to be implemented into the proposed design. Some of these features include the introduction of a wildflower meadow to encourage biodiversity and create a micro-climate atmosphere. The landscape plan also outlines that the proposed development will encourage the use of native, naturalised and indigenous species throughout much of the landscaped areas. Visual mitigation measures arising from the proposed development outlined in the landscape plan, will create a positive natural aesthetic quality to the area.

11.6.3.2.2 *Assessment of Residual Effects and their Significance*

Once mitigation measures have established in the medium to long-term, and the landscape measures become established, visual effects are expected to improve in quality.

Due to the screening by local topography and vegetation the proposed developments will not have significant visibility within the study area. In consideration of all the factors addressed in this report the overall likely effects attributed to the proposed development will be Long-term, **Slight – Moderate** visual effects.

11.6.4 Cumulative effects resulting from Interactions between various elements of the proposed development

The interaction of the various elements of the proposed development was considered and assessed in this EIAR with regards landscape. The potential for each individual element of the proposed development on its own to result in significant effects on visual receptors was considered in the impact assessment. The entire project including the interactions between all its elements was also considered and assessed for its potential to result in significant effects on landscape or visual receptors in the impact assessment presented.

All interactions between the various elements of the project were considered and assessed both individually and cumulatively within this chapter. Where necessary, mitigation was employed to ensure that no cumulative effects will arise as a result of the interaction of the various elements of the development with one another.

11.6.5 Cumulative Effects

The potential cumulative effects of the proposed development in combination with the other projects described in Chapter 15 of this report have been considered in terms of impacts on landscape.

Of the projects listed in Chapter 15 of this EIAR it was determined that, due to proximity and scale, the following relevant projects may result in cumulative landscape and visual effects when seen together with the Proposed Development:

- N6 Ring Road (Currently at Oral Hearing with ABP)
- Dreasla 20-unit. housing development (permitted) ; and
- Cumulative effects with Bearna Village SHD approximately 105 units SHD (pre-planning)

Where appropriate the application documentation, EIAR and NIS have been reviewed to inform the assessment.

The proposed N6 development will be located approximately 350m north of the Proposed Development. However, is not similar in type, nature and scale when compared to this residential development. Combined views of the proposed N6 development and the proposed residential development will likely increase following the construction of the N6 due to substantial earthworks and vegetation removal required to facilitate the road carriageway. Considering the difference in development types, there will be no cumulative effects resulting from the intervisibility of both developments. Combined views of the Proposed Development and the permitted and/or proposed residential development within Bearna Village extents will be limited to elevated locations within the proposed and permitted development sites or from elevated locations within existing housing estates towards Bearna village. Combined views are considered not significant as both developments will be seen in conjunction with surrounding existing residential housing estates.

The permitted Dreasla 20-unit housing development is approximately 500m east from the proposed development. Although, the units of this permitted development are of similar type and scale to the proposed development, there will be no intervisibility between these two developments Hence, direct cumulative landscape and visual effects will not arise from the proposed development in combination with the permitted Dreasla housing development.

The proposed Bearna Village SHD will include the development of 105 no. units approximately 500 metres to the south of the proposed development. Again due to intervening landform, vegetation and buildings there will be no intervisibility between these two developments, hence direct cumulative



landscape and visual effects will not arise from the proposed development in combination with the proposed Bearna Village SHD.

The overall cumulative impact of the Proposed Development, in combination with other projects is considered to be slight, negative.