



APPENDIX 12-2

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENTS

1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TABLES

1.1 County Clare

LCA 17 – Slieve Callan Upland	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	The proposed turbines are located within this LCA.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Land rises to moorland hills of Sliabh Callan and Ben Dash. › Mix of pasture, silage and coniferous habitats. › Very little settlement, concentrated along communication routes and in outer parts of the area. › Areas become increasingly rural as one travels eastwards, away from the coast. › Communications is aligned along valleys. › Uplands very exposed, valleys contained but unenclosed. › Long views south from Ben Dash towards Shannon Estuary.
Visibility within LCA	The ZTV indicates that there is only full theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines in the north easterly area of the LCA. Photomontage Viewpoints 03, 04 and 10 are located within this LCA.
Cumulative Baseline	<p>This LCA contains all the ‘Strategic Areas’ for wind energy development in West Clare designated by the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, as a result, there are 12 No. existing, permitted and proposed wind farms located within this LCA.</p> <p>All of the other wind farms are located to the south and south-west of the Proposed Development site. ZTV mapping shows that the high elevation of Slieve Callan screens views towards the Proposed Development from many of the other wind farms in the area, reducing the capacity to view all turbines within the same viewshed.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Status	All other wind farms located in West Clare are located in this LCA as it is the designated area for wind energy development, therefore the cumulative landscape status is: ‘3. Landscape character area with wind turbines’
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development does not change the status of the LCA identified above, therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	The Proposed Development site and a large extent of the Slieve Callan Upland LCA has been designated as a ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development in the County Clare Wind Energy Strategy. Almost the entirety of other areas in the LCA are designated as ‘Acceptable in Principle’ to wind farm development. The CWES classifies the overall sensitivity of this LCA to wind farm development as Medium to Low , which is the lowest overall sensitivity classification for any LCA in the CWES.

<p>Magnitude of Change</p>	<p>Moderate A more limited loss of or change to landscape features over a medium extent which will result in some change to landscape features and aesthetics. Could include the addition of some new uncharacteristic features or elements that would lead to the potential for change in landscape character in a localised area or part of a landscape character area. Would include moderate effects on the overall landscape character that do not affect key characteristics.</p>
<p>Significance of Effect</p>	<p>Medium to Low x Moderate = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2017) An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.</p>
<p>Mitigation Factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The Proposed Development is located in a landscape designated as a 'Strategic Area' for wind energy development. › The primary landforms of this LCA comprise elevated ridges of mountain moorland, which are landscape units with a strong capacity for absorbing winds energy developments of this scale. › Irregular localised topography and the highly vegetated nature of the surrounding farmland and forestry plantations provide considerable screening of the Proposed Development, limiting the number and extent of turbines seen within the landscape from any given point. › The screening influence of Slieve Callan (landform) ensures the proposed turbines and other wind farms are unlikely to be regularly viewed in the same viewshed, mitigating cumulative landscape effects.

LCA 1 - The Burren Uplands (< 15 km from Site)	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is approximately 14.77 kilometres away from the nearest turbine at its closest point, and 36.58 kilometres at its furthest.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Classic limestone karst scenery, rising to about 300m with numerous limestone features including pavement and caves. › Vegetation is sparse and is confined to lower more sheltered slopes, where hazel scrub is seen, and the farmed coastal shelf where mature trees and bushy hedgerows are seen. Area is renowned for high diversity of arctic-alpine flora. › Numerous historical features including wedge tombs and dolmens. › Extensive limestone walls are a strong characteristic of this area, reflecting proximity of geology to the surface. › Sparse settlement on higher slopes increases on lower slopes of coastal farmland. › Long views are afforded from the higher slopes across the limestone pavements and over to Galway Bay and the Aran Islands, elsewhere views are limited due to wooded nature of landscape and narrow roads. › Isolated and remote character in exposed limestone areas, this is combined with a more intimate landscape in lower areas.
Notable Landscape Receptor	The LCA contains The Burren National Park which forms part of The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, which is a landscape of National and International renown due to its geological and cultural values.
Visibility within LCA	Within the confines of the study area, there is full theoretical visibility with small intermittent patches of no visibility. The vast majority of this LCA is located over 15 Kilometres from the site where visibility is compromised by distance. Viewpoints 01 and 15 are located within this LCA.
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA. Wind farms in the Slieve Callan Upland LCA are visible from areas of high elevation within this LCA, although visibility is greatly reduced by distance.
Cumulative Landscape Status	2. Landscape character area with occasional wind turbines in it and/or intervisible in another landscape character area/s
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development will slightly add to the cumulative landscape effects and not change the status identified above. Therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	The landscape sensitivity of this area is 'High' according to the CWES due to its designation as a Heritage landscape and as a landscape of National and International renown. The Wind Energy Strategy classifies wind farms as being 'Not Normally Permissible'. However, the proposed Slieveacurry renewable energy development is not located in this LCA, it being approximately 15km from the closest proposed turbines and separated from the proposed site by three other, closer LCAs. This LCA is very large and extends 35.5 km north of the Proposed Development, it contains vast areas in the north (significantly beyond the LVIA Study Area of 20km) where there is limited potential for visibility of the Proposed Development.

	Therefore, in the context of the Proposed Development, the residual sensitivity of this LCA has been reduced by one level to Medium to High .
Magnitude of Change	Negligible - A change affecting smaller areas of landscape character including the loss of some landscape elements or the addition of features or elements which are either of low value or hardly noticeable.
Significance of Effect	Medium to High x Negligible = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2017) An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The Proposed Development site is located at a significant distance from this LCA and will not materially alter this landscape. The Proposed Development will be seen indirectly from a great distance and will not detract from the intrinsic cultural value attributed to this sensitive landscape receptor. › All proposed turbines are located in a landscape designated for wind energy development by the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in the CCDP. › The Slievecallan Wind Farm is visible as from within this LCA, therefore the addition of the proposed Slieveacurry renewable energy development will not be a novel addition of turbines into views from this landscape.

LCA 3 - Cliffs of Moher and Lahinch (< 5 km from Site)	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is approximately 2.9 kilometres away from the nearest proposed turbine at its closest point, and 19.1 kilometres at its furthest.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › An area of coastal plateau and farmland gently sloping inwards towards the coast and rivers. › Liscannor stone walls with slatey appearance are highly distinctive and widely used throughout the area. › Popular tourist centres at Cliffs of Moher, Lahinch and Liscannor. › Extensive coastal views are afforded from bays and plateau. › Away from the coastal road, it is increasingly remote and an isolated sense is retained. › Character of sea strongly affects the area.
Notable Landscape Receptor	The LCA contains The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, which is a landscape of National and International renown due to its geological and cultural values.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within LCA	Widespread visibility from all areas north-west of Lahinch and Liscannor, visibility ceases in all areas north of the highest elevation at the Cliffs of Moher. Lahinch and areas south, east and north-east of Lahinch demonstrated significant onsite screening by vegetation, settlements and topography. Viewpoints 11, 12, 13 and 14 are located within this LCA.
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA. Wind farms in the Slieve Callan Upland LCA are visible from areas within this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Status	2. Landscape character area with occasional wind turbines in it and/or intervisible in another landscape character area/s
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development will add to the cumulative landscape effects but not change the status identified above. Therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>The landscape sensitivity of this area is ‘High’ according to the CWES considering the value and importance attributed to the landscape of The Cliffs of Moher and its designation as a landscape of national and international renown. The Wind Energy Strategy classifies wind farms as being ‘Not Normally Permissible’, however, this is only in the designated Heritage Landscape Areas which are located along the coast. Much of the inland areas (where there is most theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development) is designated as ‘Open to Consideration’ to wind energy development.</p> <p>The proposed Slieveacurry development is not located in this LCA and actual visibility of the proposed turbines only occurs from the highly sensitive areas at distances greater than 7km. Therefore, in the context of the Proposed Development, the residual sensitivity of this LCA has been reduced by one level to Medium to High.</p>
Magnitude of Change	Negligible - A change affecting smaller areas of landscape character including the loss of some landscape elements or the addition of features or elements which are either of low value or hardly noticeable.

<p>Significance of Effect</p>	<p>Medium to High x Negligible = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2017) An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.</p>
<p>Mitigation Factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The Proposed Development will not materially alter this landscape. › Landscape effects are indirect, turbines of the Proposed Development are greater than 13 km from the high value landscape of the Cliffs of Moher and will only be seen as a background landscape element from within this LCA. › The sea and coastline are strong defining characteristics of this LCA, therefore, landscape views are directed along the coast or in an offshore direction and not focussed inland towards the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will not impact the coastal character of this landscape. › All proposed turbines are located in a designated ‘Strategic Area’ for wind energy development by the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in the CCDP. › The view of wind turbines as background elements in a neighbouring landscape is not a novel feature of this LCA, as turbines from the Slievecallan Wind Farm are currently visible from many areas. Therefore, views of the proposed Slieveacurry turbines will not be a unique addition to this LCA.

LCA 15 - Kilnamona High Drumlin Farmland (< 10 km from Site)	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is approximately 7.74 kilometres away from the nearest turbine at its closest point, and 17.09 kilometres at its furthest.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › High drumlins with mosaic of land uses, including improved and rushy farmland, wetland, lough and forest. › Coniferous shelter belts are present across the area, reflecting the area's windy exposed characteristics. › Dissected with narrow windy roads, lined with hedgebanks and hedges. › Settlement is scattered with areas closest to Ennis revealing increased housing development. › This landscape can be disorientating as views are only available from higher drumlin tops and roads are typically twisting.
Visibility within LCA	There are intermittent patches of full theoretical visibility throughout this LCA, however, onsite assessment showed considerable screening from vegetation, localised topography and winding roads which significantly impaired visibility of the site.
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Status	1. Landscape character area with no turbines.
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development will not add to the cumulative landscape effects and not change the status identified above. Therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	The Wind Energy Strategy in this LCA is primarily designated as 'Open to Consideration' with areas of 'Acceptable in Principle'. The overall landscape sensitivity to wind farm development for this LCA is Medium to Low in the CWES, which is the lowest overall sensitivity classification.
Magnitude of Change	Negligible - A change affecting smaller areas of landscape character including the loss of some landscape elements or the addition of features or elements which are either of low value or hardly noticeable. The effects could be short term and/or reversible.
Significance of Effect	Medium to Low x Negligible = Negligible = Imperceptible (EPA, 2017) An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The drumlin landforms create irregular and interchangeable topography undulations, which screen most views towards the Proposed Development site. › The highly vegetated nature of this landscape (coniferous shelter belts, windy roads line with hedges and hedgebanks) provides significant screening of views towards the Proposed Development from within this LCA. › Visibility of the proposed turbines is mitigated by the factor of distance (>7 km) reducing the impact of any likely effects on this landscape.

LCA 16 - Cullenagh River Farmlands (< 5 km from Site)	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is approximately 0.54 kilometres away from the nearest turbine at its closest point, and 21.96 kilometres at its furthest.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Drumlin farmlands drained by Cullenagh river catchment by a series of small loughs. › Buckthorn, more deciduous trees and more woody vegetation present with thick hedgerows in parts. › Drumlins orientated east-west. › Attractive intimate area with rural intact feel. › Main settlement at Inagh at crossroads, otherwise scattered.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within LCA	<p>ZTV mapping indicates that there is full theoretical visibility from areas located in close proximity to the north-east of the site, otherwise patches of full visibility interspersed by large areas of no theoretical visibility and partial theoretical visibility to the south-east.</p> <p>The weaving valleys and undulating topography of the local landscape around the Cullenagh Valley mitigate actual visibility of the Proposed Development site from within the LCA. The existent woodland and hedgerows found across the farmland landscape of this LCA provide extensive screening of the site. Viewpoint 02 is located within this LCA.</p>
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA. Wind farms in the Slieve Callan Upland LCA are visible from areas within this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Status	2. Landscape character area with occasional wind turbines in it and/or intervisible in another landscape character area/s.
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development will slightly add to the cumulative landscape effects, but not change the status identified above. Therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	The Clare Wind Energy Strategy primarily designates the area as ‘Open to Consideration’ with a small area of both ‘Acceptable in Principle’ and a ‘Strategic Area’. The overall landscape sensitivity has been designated as Medium for this LCA.
Magnitude of Change	Slight - The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area.
Significance of Effect	Medium x Slight = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2017) An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The Proposed Development will not materially alter this landscape. › Where there is theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development site in this LCA, the localised topography and abundance of vegetation (dense roadside hedgerows, mature deciduous woodland, coniferous

	<p>plantations) significantly screens views of the Proposed Development from within this landscape.</p> <p>› Actual visibility found on site showed very limited visibility of the Proposed Development site from lower elevations of the Cullenagh River Valley. Views towards the Proposed Development are limited to sparsely populated farmland on the higher elevations on the north-eastern slopes of the valley where visual receptors are infrequent and of limited value.</p>
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LCA 20 - Malbay Coastal Farmland (< 5 km from Site)	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is approximately 1.7 kilometres away from the nearest turbine at its closest point, and 20.2 kilometres at its furthest.
LCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Gently undulating pastoral farmland. › Indented coastline, with some wide sandy bays. › Strong Atlantic influence through the open and windswept character, reinforced by minimal tree cover and hedgerows. › Views to Sliabh Callan, often framed by shallow valleys and along the coastline. › Scattered but frequent settlement. Often individual houses but several small villages and larger settlements including Spanish Point and Milltown Malbay.
Visibility within LCA	Most areas within the LCA have full theoretical visibility, several areas to the west and south west of the site will be screened from view by the intervening landform. Viewpoints 05, 06, 07, 08 and 09 are located within this LCA.
Cumulative Baseline	There are no existing wind farms within this LCA. Most of the wind farms in the Slieve Callan Upland LCA are visible from areas within this LCA.
Cumulative Landscape Status	3. Landscape character area with wind turbines
Cumulative Landscape Effects	The Proposed Development will slightly add to the cumulative landscape effects but not change the status identified above. Therefore, cumulative landscape effects are considered Low .
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>The overall landscape sensitivity of this LCA is designated as ‘High’ in the CWES, this is in consideration of the coastal region as a high value and high sensitivity landscape receptor, and designation as County Clare Heritage landscape. The inland landscape value of this LCA is relatively low due to the degraded nature and strong human influence, The Wind Energy Strategy is primarily designated as ‘Open to Consideration’ with areas of ‘Not Normally Permissible’ along the coastal strip.</p> <p>The proposed Slieveacurry development is not located in this LCA, and the nearest sensitive coastal landscape receptor where there is actual visibility of the proposed turbines is located at a distance >6 km from the nearest proposed turbine. In the context of the Proposed Development and consideration of the LCA sensitivity as a whole, the residual sensitivity of this LCA has been reduced by one level to Medium to High.</p>
Magnitude of Change	Slight - The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area.

<p>Significance of Effect</p>	<p>Medium to High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2017) An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.</p>
<p>Mitigation Factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › The Proposed Development will not materially alter this landscape. › The landscape receptors of high sensitivity in this LCA are located at the coast where amenity value of the landscape is afforded by the coastline. Scenic landscape views are focussed north or south along the coast or westerly in an offshore direction. Views inland towards the Proposed Development, are not of high amenity value and are of a landscape designated for wind energy development by Clare County Council.