

**Castlepollard Quarry, Deerpark, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath**

## **Castlepollard Quarry**

# **Environmental Impact Assessment Report**

### **Section 4**

## **Population & Human Health**

**February 2022**



Part of the Breedon Group

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Westmeath County Council Planning Authority - Inspection Purposes Only!

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## 4 POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) pertains to a proposed development at an existing limestone quarry at Deerpark, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath.

The development will consist of the continued use and operation of the existing quarry (permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525), including deepening of the quarry, along with minor amendments to the permitted quarry layout comprising an extraction area of c. 4 ha within an overall application area of c. 11.4 ha. The development will include provision of new site infrastructure including water management system, wheelwash and other ancillaries.

All projects and developments that require EIA *by virtue of their nature, size and location*, have the potential to have an impact on the environment. The following sub-sections are intended to assess and describe specific areas of the existing baseline environment, to identify potentially significant impacts of the proposed development in respect of these areas, and to detail any proposed mitigation measures and on-going monitoring programmes, where appropriate.

The impact of proposed developments on human's beings forms one of the most important aspects to be considered in an EIAR. Any likely significant impact on human beings, including their community and activities, must therefore be comprehensively addressed. The principal concern in respect to this proposed development is that human beings should experience no significant unacceptable diminution in an aspect, or aspects of 'quality of life' as a consequence of the construction and operation of the proposed development.

This section of the EIAR has been prepared in order to establish the human environment in the vicinity, and to assess the potential impact, if any, of the proposed continued operation of the quarry at Castlepollard on the existing environment in respect of human beings. Matters related to water, air quality, noise, landscape and other such environmental impacts are not considered here, as these are more appropriately dealt with in their respective sections. Thus, the impacts of the proposed development on human beings in relation to particular issues are addressed in the following sections:



**Table 4.1 Environmental Topics Relating to Humans**

Section	Topic
6	Land, Soils & Geology
7	Water
9	Air
10	Noise & Vibration
11	The Landscape
12	Cultural Heritage
13	Material Assets
14	Roads & Traffic

The issues considered here include land use, population, economy & employment, social infrastructure, amenity, tourism and recreation and health and safety. The potential impact on human beings resulting from the proposed development is assessed, and possible mitigation measures proposed to reduce any significant impacts.



## 4.2 METHODOLOGY

The human environment was assessed by undertaking a desktop study and conducting visits to the site and the area. The desktop study was undertaken to compile, review and interpret available information and data pertaining to the human environment of the site and area.

The desktop study involved the assessment of all relevant demographic and socio-economic data for the area, much of which was sourced from the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The Westmeath County Development Plan (2021–2027) was also reviewed, whilst there are no plans for towns, villages or local areas relevant to the proposed development site.

Lagan, the operator of the Castlepollard Quarry is seeking planning permission for the continued use and operation of the existing quarry (permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525) including deepening of the quarry, along with minor amendments to the permitted quarry layout comprising an extraction area of c. 4 ha within an overall application area of c. 11.4 ha. The development will include provision of new site infrastructure including water management system, wheelwash and other ancillaries. A copy of the existing planning permission is included in Appendix 2.

This EIAR accompanies a planning application being submitted to Westmeath County Council by Lagan under Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The desktop study used: (a) maps and site layout plans of the quarry development; ((b) Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 (EMRA 2019); (c) the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (DoEHLG 2002); and (d) Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021 (DoPER 2015), which replaced the the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (DoEHLG 2004). The National Spatial Strategy was revoked in 2013, as it had failed to meet its objectives, but its legacy has persisted having been incorporated into subsequent iterations of the RPGs, CPDs and LAPs.

In preparing this section, regard was given to the relevant guidelines and recommendations set out in the 'Draft Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements', Draft, (EPA 2017) and 'Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements', Draft (EPA 2015).

It is considered that there is a significant volume of available data and information, which is sufficient to adequately assess the local environment with respect to human beings.

The assessment of impacts on the human environment were considered using criteria such as: (a) location of nearest sensitive receptors; (b) disturbance to the general amenity of the local environment; and (c) pre-existing use of the land and area. The operational and decommissioning phases of the proposal were both considered. In carrying out the assessment both positive and negative impacts were considered, and the significance of the impacts are rated as being either: imperceptible; not significant; slight; moderate; significant; very significant or profound (See Appendix 3).

## 4.3 BASELINE DESCRIPTION OF RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

In this section, land use, recent demographic trends, economic activity, social consideration, amenity and tourism, and health are examined.

### 4.3.1 LAND USE

Castlepollard Quarry is located within the Townland of Deerpark, at Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) Grid Ref. E647650, N768320, c. 2 km southeast of Castlepollard, c. 5 km northwest of Collinstown, c. 8.5 km southeast of Multyfarnham, c. 13.5 km northwest of Delvin, c. 13.5 km southwest of Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest of Mullingar, c. 17 km west of Clonmellon, c. 17 km southeast of Granard, c. 20 km east of Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km north of Killucan, c. 22 km south of Kilnaleck, c. 23 km southwest of Ballyjamesduff, c. 24 km southwest of Virginia, and c. 24 km northwest of Athboy (Refer to Figures 1.1 & 1.2). The quarry is located on the west side of Regional Road R395, which connects the town of Edgeworthstown in the northwest to Delvin in the southeast, via Castlepollard and Collinstown. The site is situated immediately adjacent to, and with direct access onto, the R395.

The proposed development will consist of the continued use and operation of the existing quarry (permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525), including deepening of the quarry, along with minor amendments to the permitted quarry layout comprising an extraction area of c. 4 ha within an overall application area of c. 11.4 ha. The development will include provision of new site infrastructure including water management system, wheelwash and other ancillaries.

The site occurs at an elevation of c. 88 m AOD along the northern boundary and a maximum elevation of 128 m AOD within the site and along the longitudinal axis of the ridge. The surrounding lands are largely agricultural, specifically pasture, with a substantial level of forestry plantation in the wider area. The topography of the region is characterised by a rolling, hilly landform with prominent hills topped with chert or cherty limestone with enclosed lakes and areas of peat deposits. The site is situated on the northern limit of the Carboniferous limestone terrain of the Irish Midlands, where elevations typically vary from 90 to 200 m AOD.

The quarry is located in an area between Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh that is characterised by NW-SE oriented ridges and a resulting parallel drainage system. The application site is situated in the Inny (Shannon) Sub-Catchment (SC\_030), part of the Upper Shannon Catchment (Hydrometric Area 26F). The site is a hill sitting on the landscape and the topography falls on all sides from the hilltop. The site position and surrounding topography is such that the site appears to straddle the catchments of two streams (see EIAR Figure 7.8). Each of the streams that drain these small catchment areas flow southwest towards the Yellow (Castlepollard) River, which rises in Collinstown and outfalls into the northern end of Lough Derravaragh. The site and immediate surrounds, the Yellow (Castlepollard) River and Lough Derravaragh are all within WFD Catchment & Hydrometric Area 26: Upper Shannon. No part of the site is hydrologically connected to Lough Lene. The nearest part of the catchment that drains to Lough Lene is 570 m to the northeast of the site under consideration here.

The quarry was acquired in 2017 by the applicant, Lagan, who have leasehold interest in the lands.

The quarry is currently being worked dry with infiltration of rainfall to ground on the quarry floor.

The existing quarry comprises disturbed ground in a large, level processing area located in the northern section of the site and a central horseshoe-shaped extraction area driven into the northern end of the limestone ridge. The extraction area is bordered by copses of trees on the flanks of the ridge with grassland atop, which has been stripped of overburden within the area proposed for extraction. A perimeter earthen berm has been constructed and seeded on the boundaries of the extraction area at the southern end of the site (Refer to Figure 1.3).

The floor of the existing quarry is at c. 88 m AOD. It is proposed to develop an additional extractive bench below the ground water table to c. 70 m AOD. The development will include upgrading of the Water Management System. Development of the quarry at depth below the water table and discharge to surface water is addressed within the EIAR. The proposed discharge to surface water will be subject to a licence to discharge to surface water as required under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977.

The asphalt plant previously granted planning permission under P.A. Ref. 01/525 has been removed and will not be reinstated as part of this proposed application.

No major additional construction works or land take beyond the limits of the application site are being considered here, although installation of an upgraded water treatment system, including hydrocarbon interceptor, is an essential prerequisite to discharging trade effluent to a surface watercourse.

The 2018 Corine map shows that the predominant land use within the application site was pasture although by definition it should be defined as mineral extraction related to the hard rock quarrying of limestone. Prior to the commencement of quarrying, the lands had been kept in agriculture use (Refer Figure 11.8).

The land in the wider area surrounding the quarry is typically agricultural land with dispersed farmsteads and sporadic ribbon development along roadsides. Land-use in the area consists of a patchwork of variably small to large agricultural fields, which are predominantly held in pasture (CORINE Class 231), with lesser mixed forest (313), land principally occupied by agriculture with significant areas of natural vegetation (243), transitional woodland scrub (324), coniferous forest (312), and non-irrigated arable land (211) (Refer Figure 11.8). Therefore, forest, woodland and natural vegetation is the second most abundant land use in the area, largely as afforestation, but also restricted to the hedgerows and river corridors. Although pasture is the dominant land use in the wider area, there is a history of quarrying, with a few active and disused/restored quarries in the wider area, such as at Whitehall c. 2 km to the southwest, Ankerland c. 1.5 km southeast of Fore, and Blackmiles and Baronstown c. 2.5 km east of Crookedwood.

The quarry layout comprising an extraction area of c. 4 ha within an overall application area of c. 11.4 ha (Refer to EIAR Figures 1.2 & 1.3). The site is located on lands immediately southwest of Regional Road R395. The site is roughly rectangular with an axial orientation of NW-SE. The proposed extraction area is irregular in shape and runs axially to the southern



boundary occupying the central and southern sections of the site. The site is bounded by a copse of trees on the eastern boundary and by hedgerows on the remaining boundaries, with stock fencing on the boundaries of the access road to the main site entrance. The access road extends from the northeastern corner of the main section of the site c. 130 m to the R395 Regional Road, where it has a 10 m frontage at the entrance.

The landholding is serviced by an existing secured, industrial-style entrance way with gate and a tarmac apron and internal access road. The entranceway has substantial splays providing fairly good visibility with sight distances at the site entrance of at least c. 160 m achievable in both directions along the R395 at a distance of 3 m back from the hard shoulder edge. The site access is the only frontage on to the R395.

The site is strategically located on the R395 Regional Road, which connects Delvin c. 13.5 km to the southeast with Edgeworthstown and Castlepollard c. 20.5 and 2 km, respectively, to the northwest. The proposed haulage route for all site-related HGV traffic is therefore directly onto the R395 (Refer to Figure 1.1). As such, site traffic will be immediately directed onto the regional road network and thus avoid adversely impacting the local road network.

The R395 is a c. 6 metre wide hot rolled asphalt surfaced single carriageway roadway with no hard shoulders and grass verges of < 1.0 m in width. Overall right of way width is generally 8 m. Visibility is generally good, and the route is not subject to an excessive number of bends. The surface of the roadway is in moderate to good condition. The road is subject to a continuous white line in the vicinity of the subject site, and otherwise a dashed line. The road corridor is generally open with well-maintained hedgerows, but with a few sections of mature hedgerow near the site entrance that offer some screening. There are two remnant areas of mixed broad leaved woodland located on the verges of the main quarry area. The dominant species are Ash and Hazel, with hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, willow, ivy, bramble and gorse. The copse of trees covering the eastern flank of the hill, into which the quarry has been excavated, screens the quarry workings from most views along the R395.

Outside of the immediate environs of the urban areas of Castlepollard, Delvin and Oldcastle, and the rural villages of Collinstown and Multyfarham, the settlement pattern in the area can be described as low-intensity rural settlement, with diffuse ribbon development closer Castlepollard. Residential property in the area typically comprises one-off single residences and farmsteads along public roads and to a minor extent, along and at the end of lanes off the public roads.

Residential development in the area consists of dispersed farmsteads and diffuse or sporadic ribbon development along roadsides and around towns and villages. The closest large residential settlement to the site is Castlepollard, which is located c. 2 km to the northwest. There are 10 residences within 250 m, 16 within 500 m and 42 within 1 km of the site planning application boundary (Refer Figure 4.1). There are several clusters of residential dwellings located near the site. A cluster of 6 residences are located within 250 m on the east side of the R395 across from the site entrance and north along the L5743 (i.e., nos. 5-10), while another cluster of 4 residences are located within 250 m west of the site adjacent to the drainage ditch into which it is proposed to discharge surface waters (i.e., nos. 1-4).

There are no occupied residences within the application site or landholding, and the closest is located c. 270 m northeast of the quarry extraction area.



### 4.3.2 POPULATION

The data presented below are based on the 2016 census data published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). As the 2011-2016 inter-censal period records the changes since the depths of the recent economic crisis, commonly called the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) which bottomed-out in the middle of 2011, it is more perceptive to examine a longer period, such as the 2002-2016 period, in order to discern more meaningful long-term trends in the censal population data. Thus, trends in the population will be discussed here typically by reference to censal data spanning the 15-year period 2002-2016.

Analysis of the 2016 Census indicates that in the 2011–2016 period, Westmeath experienced a moderate population increase (i.e., from 86,164 to 88,770 or 3.02%) compared to the 26 counties (i.e., 3.78 %), and the second lowest rate of increase in Leinster after Offaly (i.e., 1.66 %). Westmeath is the fifth least populated county in Leinster after Longford (i.e., 40,873), Carlow (i.e., 56,873), Offaly (i.e., 77,961) and Laois (i.e., 84,697). A population of 71,858 in 2002, 79,346 in 2006, 86,164 in 2011, and 88,770 in 2016, representing increases of 10.4 %, 8.59 % and 3.02 % for the three inter-censal periods. The average inter-censal increase in population is 7.35 %, whilst annual rate of population growth in the period was 1.57 %. Births far outpaced and more than doubled the number of deaths, with a 2011-2016 inter-censal count of 6,653 births versus 2,970 deaths, adding 3,683 to the population. Thus, the increase in the population of Westmeath between 2011 and 2016 (i.e., 2,606) is entirely due to natural increase (births over deaths), while there were 1,077 less persons due to net migration from the county.

Since 2002, the population of Leinster increased by 25.1 %, while the population of the State increased by 21.6 %. Despite this significant population growth in both the Province and State, the population growth of Westmeath (23.5 %) was only higher than that of Offaly (i.e., 22.5 %) and Dublin 20.0 %. Consequently, Westmeath' share of the provincial population (i.e., 2,634,403 in 2016) declined slightly from 3.41 % in 2002 to 3.37 % in 2016.

Dublin, along with Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow, comprise the “Functional Area of the Dublin City Region” (FADCR), and with a population of c. 2.04 million, accounts for 43 % of the population of the State (Walsh & McNicholas 2008). The latter authors noted a contrast between areas of population decline in the inner suburbs of Dublin and various rural parts, compared to areas of high increase in northeast Kildare, southeast Meath and Fingal. This is reflected in County Dublin having the lowest population growth rate (i.e., 20.0 %) in Leinster for the 2002-2016 period, whilst the population of the FADCR increased by 24.4 % in the same period. Westmeath is situated on the northwestern margin of the FADCR, and its modest population growth reflects that the distance from the FADCR and the Dublin Metropolitan Area, the primary economic engine of the state.

There are several large to medium towns with legally defined boundaries in Co. Westmeath, namely Athlone (pop. 21,349), Mullingar (pop. 20,928), Moate (pop. 2,763), Kinnegad (pop. 2,745), Rochfortbridge (pop. 1,473), Killucan (pop. 1,370), Kilbeggan (pop. 1,288), and Castlepollard (pop. 1,163). In 2016, there were thus four towns (pop. > 1,500) with legal defined boundaries and which are classified for the purpose of the census as urban settlements. The total urban population was 47,785, while the rural population was 40,985, giving a rural/urban divide of 1.17.

In their settlement hierarchy, the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly designated Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and Mullingar as a Key Town (EMRA 2019). This designation for Athlone and Mullingar sits within a wider settlement hierarchy which consists of seven settlement tiers as follows; Dublin City and Suburbs; Regional Growth Centres; Key Towns; Self Sustaining Growth Towns; Self Sustaining Towns; Towns and Villages; Rural. Self-Sustaining Growth Towns includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity to become more self-sustaining. This tier consists of Moate, Kinnegad, Kilbeggan and Castlepollard, which is the largest town in northern Westmeath (Westmeath 2021).

Because of differences in the way boundaries between urban and rural areas are incorporated into the 2002-2016 censuses, it is often difficult to give a consistent statement on the population growth of these towns. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the population growth in the 2002-2016 period for Athlone was 37.3 % (i.e., 15,544 versus 21,349) compared to Mullingar at 67.5 % (i.e., 12,492 versus 20,928), Moate at 90.3 % (i.e., 1,452 versus 2,763), Kinnegad at 431 % (i.e., 517 versus 2,745), Kilbeggan at 105 % (i.e., 627 versus 1,288), and Castlepollard at 31.0 % (i.e., 888 versus 1,163). These data suggest that proximity to Dublin and the multi-modal transport corridors of the M6, M4 and Dublin to Galway-Ballina railway corridor are probably the principal determinants in the population growth.

The nearest town to Castlepollard Quarry is Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest, c. 13.5 km southeast to Delvin, c. 13.5 km northeast to Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest to Mullingar, c. 17 km east to Clonmellon, c. 17 km northwest to Granard, c. 20.5 km west to Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km south to Killucan, c. 22.5 km north to Kilnaleck, c. 23 km northeast to Ballyjamesduff, c. 23.5 km northeast to Virginia, and c. 24 km southeast to Athboy, c. 51 km southwest to Athlone, and c. 76 km southeast to Dublin City Centre (See Figure 1.1). There are also several nearby villages or hamlets, such as c. 5 km southeast to Collinstown, c. 7 km northwest to Coole, and c. 8.5 km northwest to Multyfarnham.

EMRA and Westmeath County Council (EMRA 2019, Westmeath 2021) designated the county town of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre, one of three in the Eastern & Midland Region along with Drogheda and Dundalk. Athlone comprises 24.0 % of the county's population, and as such, is the largest urban centre and economic driver in the Midlands outside of the Dublin-Drogheda-Dundalk Economic Corridor. It also has distinct local economies and strong links to the adjacent regions, as well as being a National Transport Node situated on a strategic multi-modal transport corridor (i.e., M4 and the Dublin to Galway-Ballina railway corridor).

Mullingar is designated as a Key Town, and as such, is an important driver for local economies in area that are comparatively more remote from the main population centres of the region. It has the critical mass to support its own services and industry, and functions as a support to the development of Athlone. Mullingar is located on a strategic multi-modal transport corridor (i.e., M6 and the Dublin to Galway-Ballina railway corridor).

Westmeath County Council designated Moate, Kinnegad, Kilbeggan and Castlepollard as Self-Sustaining Growth Towns (Westmeath 2021). These settlements have strong service and employment functions and may have the capacity to support a level of commensurate population and employment growth to become more self-sustaining, in line with their capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure. Supporting the regional driver role of Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns, Self-Sustaining Growth Towns act as regionally important



local drivers providing a range of functions for their resident population and their surrounding catchments including housing, local employment, services, retail and leisure opportunities.

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) recognized the need to enhance the level of critical mass in the Midlands region by combining the complementary strengths of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore as a gateway at the heart of the region (DoEHLG 2002). However, the NPF abolished the linked Gateway status which was attributed to the gateway towns of Athlone, Tullamore and Mullingar under the NSS. Athlone is now identified as a focal point within the region and neighbouring regions in economic and employment, transport, education and public service delivery and retailing terms. The designation of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre supported by the identification of Mullingar as a Key Town in the National Planning Framework has elevated Westmeath's position in the Midlands region. The inclusion of Athlone as regional driver will provide for increased employment and investment opportunities supported by the strong tourism assets identified throughout the County and targeted regeneration projects.

The CDP identifies the lack of urban centres within northern County Westmeath, and thus the complete paucity of gateways, hubs and larger towns. The historically strong agriculture and natural resources sector, such as peat extraction, and energy production, has supported an extensive village structure throughout the Midlands. Demand for housing within easy reach of larger towns can be harnessed positively to strengthen the residential and other functions of the smaller towns and villages of Castlepollard (pop. 1,163), Delvin (pop. 697), Clonmellon (pop. 664), Multyfarnham (pop. 420) and Collinstown (pop. 356).

Castlepollard Quarry is located near the northern end of the Irish Midlands limestone terrane, interposed between the two arterial road corridors of the M4/N4 (Dublin-Maynooth-Mullingar-Longford-Carrick-on-Shannon-Sligo National Route) c. 15.5 km to the southwest at Mullingar and the M3/N3 (Dublin-Navan-Kells-Cavan National Route) c. 23 km to the northeast at Virginia, as well as the N52 (Dundalk-Kells-Mullingar-Tullamore-Nenagh National Secondary Road) c. 13 km to the southeast at Delvin, and the N55 (Cavan-Granard-Edgeworthstown-Athlone National Secondary Road) c. 20.5 km to the west at Edgeworthstown. With proximities of c. 2 km northwest to Castlepollard, c. 13.5 km southeast to Delvin, c. 13.5 km northeast to Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest to Mullingar, c. 17 km east to Clonmellon, c. 17 km northwest to Granard, c. 20.5 km west to Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km south to Killucan, c. 22.5 km north to Kilnaleck, c. 23 km northeast to Ballyjamesduff, c. 23.5 km northeast to Virginia, and c. 24 km southeast to Athboy, Castlepollard Quarry falls within the natural catchment of these settlements. However, with fuel prices forecasted to follow an overall upward trajectory, the practical limit for transport of stone and aggregate will continue to contract the natural catchment area of individual quarries.

Castlepollard Quarry also falls within the large swathe of Westmeath that is identified as Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence, although it lies close to the *Structurally Weak Rural Area*, which is restricted to a narrow swathe along the northern and northwestern border with Longford; See Westmeath 2021). The nearby Structurally Weak Rural Areas generally exhibit characteristics such as persistent and significant population decline as well as a weaker economic structure based on indices of income, employment and economic growth. The areas are more distant from the major urban areas and the associated pressure from urban generated housing. This reflects the designation of Castlepollard as the only Self-Sustaining Growth Town or Self-Sustaining Town north of Mullingar and is therefore an important



economic driver for the rural areas that are comparatively remote from the main population centres.

The preferred rural development strategy adopted by Westmeath County Council is informed by the RSES and the environmental sensitivities of the county, and its aim is to “*Support the role of rural areas in maintaining a stable population base through a strong network of villages and small towns and strengthening rural communities by supporting a resilient rural economy and the sustainable management of land and resources.*”. It is Council policy to support the sustainable development of rural areas in Westmeath by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities. Therefore, continuance of the quarry operations at Deerpark would be beneficial in this regard and support local employment, strengthen the local community and help stem migration out of the area.

Castlepollard Quarry is located in the townland of Deerpark, which is in the Electoral Division of Kinturk, the Civil Parish of Rathgarve, and the Barony of Fore. Kinturk ED has an area of 11.98 km<sup>2</sup> (1,198 ha or 2,962 acres) (Refer to Figure 4.2) and includes the following townlands: Ballany, Curraghboy, Deerpark, Drumman, Kinturk Demesne, Loughpark, Mullanakill, Slieveboy, Teevrevagh and Townparks. The townland of Deerpark has an area of 0.950 km<sup>2</sup> (95.02 ha or 234.8 acres).

The Kinturk ED has an area of 11.98 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1,344 persons, which translates into a low population density of 112 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. This compares to the population densities of 48.2, 133.0, and 67.8 persons per km<sup>2</sup> for County Westmeath, Leinster, and the State, respectively, which themselves constitute low population densities relative to those in the UK (i.e., 255 persons per km<sup>2</sup>), although not compared with Europe (i.e., 112 persons per km<sup>2</sup>). The surrounding Electoral Districts include Fore West, Coolure, Faughalstown, Collinstown, and Kilpatrick, whilst in the broader context, Kinturk is located in an otherwise relatively weakly populated area of northern County Westmeath.

The Electoral District has a sex ratio of 0.937 (i.e., 650 males versus 694 females). The higher number of females, who in general preferentially migrate to the towns, results in a characteristic pattern of urban areas, and reflects the dominance of the town of Castlepollard in the Kinturk ED.

The average age of the population in County Westmeath was 36.8 in 2016, which is slightly lower than the national average (i.e., 37.4). However, the average age in the Kinturk ED was 39.0 in 2016 (Refer to Figure 4.3). The proportion of the population aged 65 years and older in the Kinturk ED was 16.1 % in 2016 (i.e., 216 persons), which compared with 12.8 % for Westmeath and 19.1 % for the State. The ‘Old Dependency’ ratio, the ratio of persons aged +65 to working persons, in County Westmeath was 19.7 % in 2016, which was lower than the average of 20.4 % for the State. Similarly, the ‘Young Dependency’ ratio, the ratio of persons aged 0-14 to working persons, in County Westmeath was 34.3 % in 2016, which is marginally higher than the average of 32.3 % for the State. Thus, the ‘Total Age Dependency’ ratio in County Westmeath was 54.0 % in 2016 compared to 52.7 % in the State, due largely to a younger population. In the Kinturk ED, the ‘Old Dependency’ ratio was 24.9 %, while the ‘Young Dependency’ ratio was 30.0, giving a high ‘Total Age Dependency’ ratio of 54.9 %, again due largely to a young population.



Table 4.2 gives population data for the electoral districts in the vicinity of Kinturk, as well as for County Westmeath, Dublin & Mid-East Region, and the State from 2002-2016 (CSO 2017). Notably, the population of the six electoral districts that together comprise the local area shows a strong, double-digit growth of 23.0 % (1.53 % annually). Westmeath and Region both show similar strong population growth (i.e., 23.5 and 24.2 %, respectively), while the State shows somewhat lower growth (i.e., 21.6 %) in the same period. Indeed, the strong population growth of the local area can be largely attributed to that of the settlements of Castlepollard in Kinturk and Collinstown. The more rural electoral districts exhibit populations that are growing slightly but are comparatively stagnant (i.e., Cooloure, Faughalstown and Kilpatrick). The trend of lower population growth in the most rural parts of the local area is consistent with increasing urbanisation and migration to urban areas, towns and cities, whereby lower population growth has occurred in villages and rural areas instead of within the main urban areas. The urban population now amounts to 62.7 % of the population of the State, up 4.9 % since 2011. Significantly however, none of the EDs showed negative population growth over the three intercensal period from 2002 to 2016.

The largest residential settlement close to the site is Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest. The site is also c. 13.5 km northwest of Delvin, c. 13.5 km southwest of Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest of Mullingar, c. 17 km west of Clonmellon, c. 17 km southeast of Granard, c. 20.5 km east of Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km north of Killucan, c. 22.5 km south of Kilnaleck, c. 23 km southwest of Ballyjamesduff, c. 23.5 km southwest of Virginia, and c. 24 km northwest of Athboy. There are also several nearby villages or hamlets, such as Collinstown c. 5 km to the southeast, Coole c. 7.0 km northwest, and Multyfarham c. 8.5 km to the west. Residential development in the surrounding countryside consists of isolated farm dwellings and owner occupied bungalow/houses along public roads with some ribbon development on the approach roads to Castlepollard and other large settlements (Refer to EIAR Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 4.1).

**Table 4.2 Population in the Local Area 2002-2016**

District	2002	2006	2011	2016	%Change 2002-2016
Fore West	289	362	399	384	32.9
Cooloure	276	286	290	304	10.1
Faughalstown	225	236	236	234	4.0
Collinstown	326	431	474	501	53.7
Kilpatrick	196	179	222	211	7.7
Kinturk	1,107	1,228	1,241	1,341	21.1
Total Local Area	2,419	2,722	2,862	2,975	23.0
County Westmeath	71,858	79,346	86,164	88,770	23.5
Dublin & Mid-East Region	1,535,446	1,662,536	1,804,156	1,907,332	24.2
State	3,917,203	4,239,848	4,588,252	4,761,865	21.6

**Note: Data from CSO (2017).**

### 4.3.3 ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

Westmeath is an inland county in the north midlands covering an area of 1,840 km<sup>2</sup>, which equates to 2.62 % of the national landmass. Occupying a strategic position near the centre of the country, County Westmeath is land locked and shares borders with five adjoining counties; Cavan, Meath, Offaly, Roscommon, and Longford. County Westmeath is only c. 55 kms from the Dublin metropolitan area, and this relative proximity to the capital has had a major effect on both the nature and extent of development and the associated traffic movements. In particular, the southern tract of the county, containing the M4/N4 and M6, is increasingly coming under the influence of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

Westmeath benefits from this proximity to Ireland's primary economic hub and National Gateway, and the largest market in the State. The excellent, multi-modal transport infrastructure (i.e., M4/N4 and M6 and Galway and Sligo mainline railways) provides ready access to Dublin Airport and Dublin Port, as well as to other regional growth centres of Athlone, Galway and Sligo, as well as the county towns of Longford and Carrick-on-Shannon, also delivers strong connectivity for the county.

County Westmeath consists of a low-lying limestone plain with a central string of four prominent lakes, namely Loughs Ennell, Owel, Derravaragh and Lene, while the western border is defined by Lough Ree and the River Shannon. A large tract of peatlands runs along the northwest border with Longford from Lough Sheelin to Ballymahon. A prominent system of eskers occurs in the south, and to a lesser extent in the northeast, of the county, while limestone hills dominate the central north of the county.

The economic development strategy set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) identified development of economic clusters centred on strategic economic growth corridors and growth towns. The renewed focus of the RSES along multi-modal growth corridors connecting the economic growth centres within the region favours Athlone and Mullingar, which are located along the M4/N4 and M6 road corridors and the Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Sligo railway corridors (Westmeath 2021). Athlone, in particular, is connected to Ireland's largest population centres by excellent road and rail infrastructure, with Dublin City & Airport, Galway City and Shannon Airport each within a 60–90 minute drive.

Westmeath lies outside the Dublin Metropolitan area and in the centre of the country. Its location affords Westmeath an important position as a counterweight to the dominance of Dublin in the EMRA. The key towns of Athlone and Mullingar offer population centres of a sufficient scale that can offer viable alternative employment bases to Dublin in the region. Athlone is designated as a 'Regional Growth Centre', one of only three in the EMRA region alongside Drogheda and Dundalk. Regional Growth Centres are "large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area". In contrast, Mullingar is designated as a 'Key Town' described as "large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres".

Westmeath is the most affluent local authority area in the Midlands Region, and the 15<sup>th</sup> most affluent county in the country (Trutz Haase 2008). Relative to the national average, Westmeath has a similarly aged population (mean = 36.8 vs 36.5 years), but slightly lower



labour-force participation rates (61.9 vs 60.8 %). Almost 65% of the county's population is of working age (persons aged 15 to 64). As of 2016, the largest cohort of the population was aged 30 to 39, representing over 15 % of the total population. This would indicate a County with a strong working age population, essential for a thriving economy. There is a large proportion of younger residents, with 22.3 % of residents aged 0 to 14 years old, indicating the relative youthfulness of Westmeath (Westmeath 2021), which bodes well for the economy going forward.

Similar to national trends, the services sector in Westmeath continues to grow its share of the local economy in employment and productivity terms. Westmeath is a focal point for economic development and modern industry within the Midlands. It provides a strong economic centre for the region, with employment largely centred in, Commerce and Trade, Manufacturing Industries and Professional Services. The retail/wholesale trade is the biggest employer in Westmeath. Employment in manufacturing in Westmeath is high relative to the Midlands Region and the national average. In excess of 3,400 people work in the industrial sector in the county. Industrial estates and business parks are located in Athlone, Mullingar, Kilbeggan, Castlepollard and Clonmellon.

Athlone and Mullingar are the county's two largest and comparably sized towns (i.e., pop. = 21,3049 and 20,928, respectively). The age profiles of Athlone and Mullingar show that these are home to a very young demographic, largely under 35 years of age (53 and 52 %, respectively), well ahead of the national average (47 %). Athlone and Mullingar have highly skilled workforces, with 30 and 25 %, respectively, of people having attained qualifications at 3rd level or above. Westmeath is relatively well-connected in terms of internet connectivity, with approximately 65 % of all households in the county having a broadband connection, which increases to 71 % in Athlone and 72.5 % in Mullingar.

The major employment centres in County Westmeath are Athlone, Mullingar, Kilbeggan, Moate, Castlepollard, and Clonmellon:

### **Athlone**

Athlone is home to 21,349 people and is connected to Ireland's largest population centres by excellent road and rail infrastructure; with Dublin City & Airport, Galway City and Shannon Airport each within a 60-90 min. drive. The town is situated on a strategic multi-modal transport corridor (i.e., M6 and the Dublin-Galway and Dublin-Ballina railway corridor). The town is an affordable place to live and work in, particularly compared to Dublin City—with residents enjoying both shorter commute times and excellent schools, shopping and childcare facilities. The town also has numerous sports, recreation and natural amenities nearby.

Athlone is located near the geographical centre of Ireland, and lies on the Shannon River at the border between counties Westmeath and Roscommon. Most of the town lies on the east bank of the Shannon, although under the terms of the Local Government Act of 1898, six townlands on the west bank of the Shannon, formerly in County Roscommon, were incorporated into the town, and consequently, into the county of Westmeath.

Athlone's designation in national planning as a 'Regional Centre' earmarks it for the highest levels of population and employment growth in the Midlands region (with a target of 30,000 people by 2031). This is reflective of how its size and composition has changed in recent years. The town's age profile illustrates that it is home to a very young demographic, largely





under 35 years of age (53 %); surpassing the national average (47 %). Importantly, Athlone has a highly skilled workforce, with 30 % of people having attained qualifications at 3rd level or above.

Athlone is characterized by multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism, with 23 % of its resident population being of a non-Irish nationality (vs. 12 % nationally). This highlights the impact of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and multi-national companies in attracting students and workers from overseas. Both domestic and international enterprise have come to Athlone to capitalise on the emerging research and development scene - which centres around AIT and its many research institutes (incl. 'MRI' for Polymer Materials, 'BRI' for bioscience R&D and 'SRI' for software innovation) and two Technology Gateways (APT and COMAND). Acting alongside applied industry partners and coupled with Garrycastle IDA Business and Technology Park, Athlone has established itself as an emerging hub for Life Sciences, Technology and Global Business Service providers.

The Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) is the regional third level college. In 2021/22 it will merge with Limerick IT to become the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. AIT aims to attain university status, as there is no institution providing university-level education in the Irish Midlands. The AIT has a campus size of 44 acres, and has new, purpose-built facilities. Home to 6,000 students, AIT offers 200+ industry-focused programmes, and has the authority to award at PhD level in the areas of Microbiology, Toxicology, Polymer Engineering and Software ICT. AIT is currently in the process of achieving technological university designation which will leverage the Midlands region and ensure its continued growth and success.

The Midlands Innovation and Research Centre, the institute's campus business incubator, provides incubation facilities and business development support for knowledge-based start-ups. RTÉ's Midlands studio and office are located at AIT.

Athlone is also the regional centre for a large number of state-run and semi-state organisations. The Department of Education, State Examinations Commission, Revenue Commissioners, Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland all have bases in the town. Athlone is also a major Irish military centre, with the headquarters of the Western Command of the Irish Army garrisoned at the barracks in the town on the west bank of the Shannon.

Athlone's major employers include Alkermes (succeeded Elan), Alienware, Athlone Extrusions (polymer supplier), Bioclin Laboratories, Ericsson, ICT Eurotel, Pharmaplaz, Tyco Healthcare, and Utah Medical. Other significant employers include Abbott, AIT, Athlone Hospital, FRS, Genesys, Hammond Lane Metals, Heat Merchants Group, IO Systems, Jazz Pharma, KCI, Nueda, PPD Laboratories, Secto Services, Teleflex, Western Command Army Barracks, and Woodfit.

The following are significant employment centres in Athlone:

- Blyry Business Park;
- Blyry Industrial Estate;
- Creggan Industrial Estate;
- Daneswell Business Park;



- IDA's Athlone Business & Technology Park;
- IDA's Monksland Business Park;
- IDA's Business Park, Garrycastle;
- Moydrum Business Park;
- Arcadia Athlone Retail Park; and
- Golden Island Shopping Centre.

## Mullingar

Mullingar is the County town and a designated Key Town with a strategic central location within the County, and as such is a strong economic driver with the capacity to act as a regional driver and complement Athlone, the Regional Growth Centre.

Mullingar's skilled workforce has been successful in attracting inward investment in the form of R&D, manufacturing and financial services. The town is home to 'Irish Manufacturing Research' (IMR), a not-for-profit research centre committed to delivering solutions to advanced manufacturing challenges by working with industry and academia to push the boundaries of R&D. Mullingar provides a strong economic centre for the region, with employment largely centred in professional services (26 %), manufacturing (17 %), and commerce & trade sectors (24 %). A large portion (28 %) of the businesses in Mullingar are in less conventional sectors, including Engineering, ICT, FinTech, Robotics, Advanced Manufacturing and R&D. Professional and public services, manufacturing and construction and a growing tourism sector, comprise the town's other key industries and supplement its broad commercial base.

There are a number of industrial estates in Mullingar, including Mullingar Business Park and Lough Sheever Corporate Park in Mullingar. In addition, the IDA have built a 70 acre Business Park in Marlinstown, Mullingar, while there is an Enterprise Centre in Bishopsgate Street. Lakepoint Business & Retail Park, Harbour Place Shopping Centre and the Fair Green Development in Mullingar are leading retail centres that have attracted leading brand names such as Dunnes Stores, Penneys, TK Max, Woodies DIY, etc.

Major local employers include the Midland Regional Hospital, Lidl Regional Distribution Centre, PEM Automation, Trend Technologies, Taconic International, Mullingar Pewter, Imperial Tobacco Mullingar, Genesis Fine Arts, and Green Farm Foods, Pharmed, FBD Insurance, and more.

The following are significant employment centres in Mullingar:

- Mullingar Business Park;
- Lough Sheever Corporate Park;
- IDA's Marlinstown Business Park;
- Mullingar Enterprise & Technology Innovation Centre;
- Lakepoint Business & Retail Park;
- Robinstown Business Park;
- SteriPack Group Ltd.;



- Irish Manufacturing Research, IMR;
- Mullingar Regional Hospital;
- St. Francis Private Hospital; and
- St Loman's Hospital.

### Castlepollard

Castlepollard serves as the principal town in the northern part of the county and is located close to counties Meath, Cavan and Longford. The town is located 20 km north of Mullingar and 75 km northwest of Dublin. It is served by a good quality road network, three regional roads converge in the centre of the town; the R394 from Mullingar to Finnea which links to the N55, the R195 to Oldcastle, and the R395 from Delvin to Edgeworthstown which links to the M4 and N55. According to the 2016 census, the population of the town was 1,163 residents.

Castlepollard is designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town and is the largest town in the northern part of the County. It is recognised as the main service centre in north Westmeath and an important economic driver for areas that are comparatively remote from the main population centres of the region. Opportunity exists in building upon its established economic base, in particular, the strong manufacturing, retail and agricultural sectors, promoting its role as a tourism base for north Westmeath and securing benefits from spin-offs given its proximity to Mullingar. Additional lands can be zoned for employment use, while the potential of the strategic location of Castlepollard as a tourist base for local attractions such as Tullynally Castle, Fore Abbey, Mullaghmeen Forest and Lough Lene can be maximised. The significant tourism potential of this area is widely recognised due to the unique cluster of noteworthy heritage sites and visitor attractions within a small geographical area, coupled with an exceptional picturesque landscape of hills and limestone lakes.

Significant residential development in Castlepollard in recent years has resulted in a population increase of 30 % since the 2002 census. The development strategy for Castlepollard is to support new housing and population growth, facilitating compact growth and providing a viable alternative to rural one-off housing. There is potential for better use of under-utilised and vacant sites and buildings within the existing footprint of the town, which could drive the delivery of quality housing, services and employment opportunities. The main employment centre in Castlepollard is:

- Innova Business Park, incl. Castlepollard Enterprise Centre.

### Kilbeggan

Kilbeggan is designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, located in the south of the county on the M6 Dublin-Galway Road corridor. It lies 36 km southwest of the site and is too small to have any significant bearing on the site. The Kilbeggan Distillery and racecourse are important to the local economy as are its handful of large national and international employers. The following are significant employment centres in Mullingar:

- Comagh Industrial Estate;
- Industrial Estate Moate Rd, Meeniska;
- Kilbeggan Distillery;



- Kilbeggan Racecourse; and
- Dawn Meats.

### Moate

Moate is a strong market town that has been designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town, and is located in the western lowlands. The main employment centre in Moate is:

- Moate Business Park.

### Clonmellon

Clonmellon has been designated in the Towns and Villages category with local service and employment functions, and is located in the eastern corner of the county. The main employment centre in Clonmellon is:

- Clonmellon Industrial Estate.

### Delvin

Delvin has been designated in the Towns and Villages category with local service and employment functions, and is also located in the eastern corner of the county. The main employment centre is the retail outlets lining the main street, as well as the livestock sales yard and Tullnally Castle, where tours, weddings and special events are held.

County Westmeath is a largely rural county, and rural Westmeath is home to a diverse range of land uses including agriculture, the primary land use, and equine industries, centres of local food production, recreational and tourist activities, established villages and rural housing. The Council will continue to support initiatives which will sustain rural communities in the changing economic climate through farm diversification and new employment opportunities. There is a continuing need to balance housing need for those who live and work in the countryside, while at the same time avoiding unsustainable patterns of development and protecting environmental qualities.

Approximately 70 % of the total land area of the county is given over to agriculture. The land is predominantly held in pasture with lesser amounts of arable land and land principally occupied in agriculture with significant natural vegetation. The other dominant land uses are peat bogs along the northwestern border and forestry more widely dispersed (c. 6 % of land in the county). Despite a decline in employment within the agricultural sector in recent decades, the 2016 Census recorded a marginal increase of the working population within the county were engaged in full-time employment in agriculture, forestry or fishing from previous intercensal period (i.e., 1,944 persons or 5.5 % of the working population). Agriculture therefore remains an important part of the economic life of the county. In addition to its productive employment aspect, the practice of agriculture still largely manages the rural environment and landscape and provides an amenity for the enjoyment of the general population.

Just under half of Westmeath residents live in rural areas, and rural economic sectors remain very important in Westmeath. According to Census 2016 data, 5.5 % of Westmeath workforce is engaged in farming, fishing and forestry, which is higher than the national average of 5 %.

The tourism sector in Ireland is now one of our largest national indigenous industries, supporting an estimated 270,000 jobs. Ireland is promoted here and abroad using 'Brand



Ireland', under which four distinct experience propositions are used to define the appealing characteristics of each region. Westmeath sits within two of these regional experience brands, 'Ireland's Ancient East' to the east and the newest of the four brands, 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' to the west. The county has considerable heritage and cultural assets, along with a scenic and rich natural environment. Coupled with the vibrant towns and villages and easily accessible location, it clearly has high potential for tourism. Annual visitors to the county reached 262,000 in 2017, of which 103,000 were from overseas.

In line with the Ireland's Ancient East brand, Westmeath offers a rich heritage, with local storytellers who provide unforgettable tours of our ancient sites. Attractions include the Hill of Uisneach, Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, Kilbeggan Distillery, Tullynally Castle gardens and Fore Abbey. The lakes and waterways of Westmeath are also connected with a rich heritage, including the famous legend of the Children of Lir associated with Lough Derravarragh. The Royal Canal traverses the county, with many preserved original bridges and greenways will form part of the first coast-to-coast greenway from Dublin to Galway. The county, which is known as the 'Lake County', has numerous lakes and waterways and a growing offering of blueways and greenways.

Although urban areas are home to a greater fraction of the population of Westmeath (i.e., 47,785 or 53.8 % in 2016), rural areas are still home to a substantial population (i.e., 40,985 or 46.2 % in 2016). This urban/rural divide in Westmeath (i.e., 1.17) is the lowest of any county inside the GDA, and contrasts with that of the State, the Mid-East Region, and Dublin County (i.e., 1.68, 1.82 and 37.8, respectively). Although rural areas account for 46.2 % of the population, only 5.5 % are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2016. Nonetheless, agriculture is the primary land-use in the county, but the economy is only moderately reliant on this sector.

There are significant cutaway peatlands in the county mainly situated in a large tract running along the northwestern border from Lough Sheelin to Ballymahon. There are smaller tracts running along the eastern border between Delvin and Ballivor and along the southeastern border near Milltownpass and Tyrrellspass. These offer potential for tourism, amenity, educational and research purposes. They could also potentially accommodate large scale alternative energy production in the form of solar and wind. Peatlands are one of the world's most important ecosystems in that they are long-term carbon sinks in the terrestrial biosphere. Rewetting and restoration of peatland has the potential to secure existing carbon stock and reinitiate the carbon sequestration capacity of degraded peatlands. Bord na Mona is moving from "brown" to "green". The rewetting bogs is already underway and carbon sequestration has significant potential for employment and income generation on a long term basis.

In 2017, there were c. 15,163 ha of forest in County Westmeath, amounting to 8.2 % forest cover (DoAFM 2020). In addition, there were 17,000 ha of not-forest hedgerow, scrub and woodland (HSW), amounting to a further 9.2 % cover under HWS. While the forests provide timber and other wood based products, the bogs, forests and woodlands also provide recreational and tourism amenities for local communities and visitors.

Of the 40,956 workers recorded in 2011, 32,319 were at work, giving a nominal, non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 21.1 % at the height of the recession, compared to the national average of 19.0 %. In 2016, of the 41,255 workers recorded, 35,289 were at

work, giving a nominal, non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 14.5 %, amounting to a 30.3 % reduction and indicating significant economic recovery.

Examination of the CSO Live Register figures for County Westmeath during the recession (CSO 2021) shows that unemployment levels rose dramatically from the end of 2007 to 2013 and remained a factor of about 3 times the pre-recession levels, essentially fluctuating around 10,500 during 2010 and 2013 (See Figure 4.4). In the 2011 census, at the height of the recession, unemployment stood at 21.1 % in Westmeath, compared to 19 % nationally. The dramatic increase in unemployment was largely associated with the collapse of the construction industry and the associated service industries. The unemployment level in Westmeath began to fall gradually in 2013, and fell below the 10,000 mark in September 2013. The level of employment has continued to improve steadily, reflecting a broad economic recovery. In May 2021, there were only 4,078 on the live register in County Westmeath, while nationally, there were 171,699 on the live register. The national and Westmeath figures indicate almost a complete recovery in employment from the Financial Crash, albeit tempered by the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. This is reflected in the data bracketing the 2011-2016 inter-censal period alone, which show that Westmeath had even by then experienced a very significant economic recovery.

From Table 4.3, it is apparent that the dominant employment sectors in Westmeath are professional services (23.4 %), commerce and trade (21.8 %), and other (17.5 %), with all other sectors combined accounting for only 37.3 %. Importantly, over a fifth of the total workforce living in Westmeath works outside the county, probably mostly in Dublin Metropolitan Area (Westmeath 2017).

'Professional Services' is the largest sectoral employer (23.3 %) in the Kinturk ED, with 'Other' being the second largest sectoral employer (19.3 %), while 'Commerce and Trade' is the third largest sectoral employer (19.1 %). Given that approximately 20 % of the workforce in Westmeath works outside of county, and given the distance of the Kinturk ED to Dublin, it is probable that the importance of "Professional" and 'Commerce and Trade' reflects the large fraction of the workforce in the Kinturk ED that works outside both the electoral division and county and in the towns of Maynooth and Leixlip, as well as Dublin Metropolitan Area. The fourth most important sector is the 'Manufacturing' (17.3 %), followed by 'Public Administration' (6.00 %), 'Building and Construction' (5.57 %), 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' (4.93 %), while 'Transport and Communications' (4.50 %) is the smallest employer (See Table 4.3).

Historically, agriculture and businesses supporting agricultural production would probably have been the main source of employment in the area and nearby villages and towns. Today, the nearby settlements of Castlepollard, Collinstown, Multyfarnham, Coole, Delvin, and Clonmellon, still offer few employment opportunities, whereas Mullingar, Athlone and Kilbeggan, and the Dublin Metropolitan Area offer significant employment opportunities. There would also be some opportunities on nearby farms, golf courses, nurseries, and quarries.



Table 4.3 Employment by industry in County Westmeath and Kinturk ED in 2016

Industry	County Westmeath		Kinturk ED	
	Count	%	Count	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1,944	5.51 %	23	4.93 %
Building and construction	2,008	5.69 %	26	5.57 %
Manufacturing	4,571	12.95 %	81	17.34 %
Commerce and trade	7,665	21.72 %	89	19.06 %
Transport and communications	2,426	6.87 %	21	4.50 %
Public administration	2,228	6.31 %	28	6.00 %
Professional services	8,269	23.43 %	109	23.34 %
Other	6,178	17.51 %	90	19.27 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,289</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

Note: Data from CSO (2017).

The average journey times to work, school or college was c. 8 minutes for residents of the Kinturk ED in 2016, whereas 70 % of the journey times are 22 minutes. Journey times of 8 minutes are consistent with commuting to work in Castlepollard, while those of c. 22 minutes are consistent with commuting to work in Mullingar. Approximately 10 % of the commuter journeys were 60 minutes or longer, which would be consistent with commuting to Athlone, Maynooth or the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The M4 is accessible from a node at Mullingar via the R394 directly from Castlepollard.

The quarry directly employs a work force of two persons. There will be occasional contractors, including crushing, drilling and blasting, hauliers and plant maintenance people on site.



#### 4.3.4 SOCIAL CONSIDERATION

The townland of Deerpark is located in a rural area, which is defined as a Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence, and as stated above, has experienced a population growth of 23% during the 2002-2016 period. Such areas occur in the hinterland of larger settlements and are prone to ribbon and over spill development from these urban areas.

Residential development in the area consists of dispersed farmsteads and diffuse or sporadic ribbon development along roadsides and around towns and villages. The closest large residential settlement to the site is Castlepollard, which is located c. 2 km to the northwest. There are 10 residences within 250 m, 16 within 500 m and 42 within 1 km of the site planning application boundary (Refer Figure 4.1). There are several clusters of residential dwellings located near the site. A cluster of 6 residences are located within 250 m on the east side of the R395 across from the site entrance and north along the L5743 (i.e., nos. 5-10), while another cluster of 4 residences are located within 250 m west of the site adjacent to the drainage ditch into which it is proposed to discharge surface waters (i.e., nos. 1-4).

Another residence, now vacant and in the ownership of Lagan, is located on the southeast side of the R395, immediately north of the site entrance.

There are no occupied residences within the application site, and the closest is located c. 270 m northeast of the quarry extraction area. There has been a long historical association with quarrying at this location and consideration has been given to screening of the development, phasing and direction of working with respect to receptors.

There are many residential settlements close to the site, with the settlement of Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest. The site is also c. 13.5 km northwest of Delvin, c. 13.5 km southwest of Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest of Mullingar, c. 17 km west of Clonmellon, c. 17 km southeast of Granard, c. 20.5 km east of Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km north of Killucan, c. 22.5 km south of Kilnaleck, c. 23 km southwest of Ballyjamesduff, c. 23.5 km southwest of Virginia, and c. 24 km northwest of Athboy. There are also several nearby villages or hamlets, such as Collinstown c. 5 km to the southeast, Coole c. 7.0 km northwest, and Multyfarnham c. 8.5 km to the west. Residential development in the surrounding countryside consists of isolated farm dwellings and owner occupied bungalow/houses along public roads with some ribbon development on the approach roads to Castlepollard and other large settlements (Refer to EIA Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 4.1).

Of the larger residential settlements, Virginia lies on the N3, Clonmellon, Delvin and Mullingar lie on the N52, Mullingar and Edgeworthstown lie on the N4 Strategic Radial Transport Corridor, and Edgeworthstown and Granard lie on the N55. The M4 junction lies c. 13.0 km southwest of Castlepollard on the R394 near Mullingar. The remaining towns and villages lie on regional roads. The concentration of villages and small towns, and paucity of large towns (except for Mullingar), in the region reflects the lower population densities in northern Westmeath.

The nearest Post Office outlet is An Post, Green Street, Castlepollard, c. 2 km to the northwest, while the next nearest Post Office is the Coole Post Office. Castlepollard offers a large range of shops and services, including hotel accommodation, Civic Offices, Tesco Express, banking, pharmacies, etc.





The nearest childcare facility is Little Friends Montessori, Little Treasures Early Education Centre, First Class Montessori, Sundancers Montessori and Happy Days Creche, all in Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest and Kidz Aloud in Collinstown c. 4 km to the southeast.

The nearest primary schools are:

- St. Michael's Mixed National School, Castlepollard, c. 2.0 km northwest, with enrollment of the primary education of 139 boys and girls. Catholic.
- Castlepollard Parochial National School, Castlepollard, c. 2km to the northwest, with enrollment of approximately 20 boys and girls. Church of Ireland.
- St. Marys National School, Collinstown, c. 4.25 km to the southeast, with enrollment of approximately 149 boys and girls. Catholic.
- Diarmada National School, Whitehall, c. 2.5 km to the southwest, with enrollment of approximately 84 boys and girls. Catholic.
- St. Feichin's National School, Fore, c. 3 km to the northeast, with enrollment of approximately 100 boys and girls. Catholic.

The nearest secondary schools are:

- Castlepollard Community College, c. 2 km to the northwest, with an enrolment of 138 boys and 115 girls. Inter Denominational.
- Wilson's Hospital School. Multyfarnham, c. 8.5 km to the southwest, with an enrolment of 192 boys and 193 girls. Church Of Ireland.
- Mullingar Community College, Millmount Road, Mullingar, c. 15.5 km to the southwest, with an enrollment of 172 boys and 118 girls. Inter Denominational.
- Colaiste Mhuire, Mullingar, c. 15.5 km to the southwest, with an enrolment of 774 boys. Catholic.
- Loreto College, Mullingar, c. 15.5 km to the southwest, with an enrolment of 876 girls. Catholic.
- St Finian's College, c. 15.5 km to the southwest, Mullingar, with an enrolment of 410 boys and 408 girls. Catholic.

The nearest third level Institutions are:

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Blanchardstown Institute of Technology (or BIT), Blanchardstown
- Institute Technology Tallaght (or ITT), Tallaght
- Dublin Institute of Technology (or DIT), Dublin City
- Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (or IADT), Dun Laoghaire
- The European College of Management, Naas

The nearest universities are:

- National University of Ireland in Maynooth



- Dublin City University (DCU) in Glasnevin, Dublin City
- Trinity College Dublin (TCD) in Dublin City
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in Dublin City
- University College Dublin (UCD) at Belfield, Dublin City

Other Further Education facilities are:

- Cavan Institute, Cavan Town
- Longford Institute, Longford Town

The nearest Roman Catholic churches are:

- St. Michael's Church, Castlepollard
- St. Marys Church, Collinstown
- St. Feichin's Church, Fore
- St. Marys Church, Dromone
- Multyfarnham Parish Church, Multyfarnham

The nearest Church of Ireland churches are:

- St. John the Baptist Church of Ireland, Multyfarnham
- Mayne Church of Ireland, Coole

The nearest churches or houses of worship of other major denominations are:

- Presbyterian: Mullingar Presbyterian Church, Mullingar  
Corboy Presbyterian Church, Edgeworthstown
- Methodist: Athlone Methodist Church, Athlone  
Methodist Church, Abbeycartron, Longford
- Baptist: Longford Baptist Church, Longford  
Cherith Athlone Baptist Church, Athlone
- Jewish: Dublin Hebrew Congregation, Rathfarnham, Dublin
- Islam: Mullingar Islamic Cultural Society Centre, Mullingar  
Longford Mosque, Longford
- Jehovah Witness: Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mullingar  
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Carlow

There is also the Christian Congregation in Ireland in Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan and Naas, Co. Kildare, which are a non-sectarian, non-denominational fellowship of Christian assemblies.

The nearest Primary Health Care Centre is Castlepollard Medical Practice, Castlepollard. The Coole Clinic is located c. 6.5 km to the northwest in Coole and provides medical, dental and physiotherapy services, while the next nearest Health Centre is in Delvin c. 14.5 km to the



southeast. There is a multitude of Health Centres in Mullingar c. 15.5 km to the southwest. The nearest public hospital is the Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar, followed by the St. Francis Private Hospital, Mullingar, which offers a wide range of surgical care. The next nearest hospitals are Cavan General Hospital, Cavan Town, and Our Lady's Hospital, Navan.

The nearest nursing home is Maple Court Nursing Home, Castlepollard, while others in the wider area are Portuncula Nursing Home, Mulifarnham, Cluain Lir Care Centre, Mullingar, Newbrook Nursing Home, Mullingar, Sheelin Nursing Home, Mount Nugent, Rose Lodge Nursing Home, Killucan, and St. Camillus Nursing Centre, Killucan

The nearest Fire Station is located in Castlepollard, while the next closest is the Mullingar Fire Station, where both stations are retained services. The Westmeath Fire Service is headquartered at the Mullingar Station.

The nearest Garda Station is located on the Dublin Road (R395) in Castlepollard, followed by the Oldcastle Garda Station, Multyfarnham Garda Station, Delvin Garda Station, and Mullingar Garda Station. These stations fall within the Meath/Westmeath Division of An Garda Síochána's Eastern Region, and are headquartered in Mullingar. Other facilities in the wider area, include the community centres and sports and leisure centres in the larger settlements.

The Castlepollard GAA Club is almost exclusively concerned with Hurling, and is located in Castlepollard c. 2 km northwest of the site. Other local GAA clubs in the area include the Ringtown Hurling Club, Whitehall, Lough Lene Gaels GAA Club, Collinstown, Ballycomoye GAA Club, Ballymanus, Multyfarnham GAA Club, Multyfarnham, and Crookedwood GAA Club, Crookedwood.

Soccer clubs are located nearby at Castlepollard Celtic Football Club, BMC United Football Club, Crossakiel, Oldcastle United Football Club, Oldcastle, Delvin Celtic Football Club, Delvin, Raharney United Football Club, Raharney, Lisryan Schoolboy Soccer Club, Granard, and Mullingar Athletic Football Club, Mullingar. Rugby clubs are located at Mullingar Rugby Club, Mullingar, Virginia Rugby Club, Virginia, Cavan Rugby Club, Cavan Town, and Navan Rugby Football Club, Navan. There is also the Mullingar Hockey Club at Heathland, Multyfarnham, Fr. Breen Park, Abbeyleix and the Mullingar Cricket Club, Mullingar.

There are several golf clubs located in the wider area, including Ballinlough Castle Golf Club, Ballinlough, Mullingar Golf Club, Belvedere, Headfort Golf Club, Kells, County Meath Golf Club, Trim, Mount Temple Golf Club, Mount Temple, Moate Golf Club, Moate, County Longford Golf Club, Longford, Moyvalley Golf Club, Moyvalley, and the 9-hole course at Virginia Golf Club, Virginia. The nearest pitch & Putt Club is at Collinstown.

Tennis is available at the Mullingar Tennis & Badminton Club, Mullingar, Grange Tennis Club, Grange, Co. Westmeath, Kells Tennis Club, Kells, Co. Meath, and Longford Tennis Club, Longford.

Swimming is available at Mullingar Swimming Pool, Mullingar, Cavan Swimming Pool & Leisure Complex, Cavan Town, Kells Swimming Pool, Kells, and at the Subtropical Swimming Paradise, Centre Parks, Ballymahon. Lough Lene and Lough Owel are also popular for open water swimming. Gym training is available at Energie Fitness, Gym Power Factory, Fitness 4UHUB, Club Active, NGS Gym & Rehabilitation Clinic, Performance Driven Strength and Conditioning, all in Mullingar, Titan Strength & Fitness, Kells, and the Fitness Academy,



Athboy. Various other activities are available at Chill Yoga, Castlepollard, Pollard Karting, Kinturk Demesne, Castlepollard, and Boxing at O'Neill Fitness, Oldcastle.

Other facilities in the region include community centres and halls, some of which are stand-alone or are associated with local GAA grounds.

Most residential properties in the area are serviced by mains water supply (Byrne 2001). There are also houses in the area served by bored wells. Most houses are serviced by septic tank systems and proprietary effluent treatment systems.

Power to local residences is provided by over-head lines. In 2016, a total of 69.6% of residences in the Kinturk ED had internet access—61.2% by broadband.

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#### 4.3.5 TOURISM & AMENITY

Westmeath is a landlocked, inland county in the north midlands and occupies a strategic position near the centre of the country—yet is only c. 65 kms from the Dublin metropolitan area. Dublin is the primary economic hub and National Gateway, and the largest market in the State, and the southern and eastern half of the county are increasingly coming under its influence. The excellent, multi-modal transport infrastructure (i.e., road and rail) provides strong connectivity with ready access to Dublin Airport and Dublin Port, as well as to the other formerly gateways of Galway and Sligo in the West.

County Westmeath consists of lowland limestone terrain containing several prominent lakes, including Lough Ree on the River Shannon, which forms southwest border of the county. There are no mountains in the county although the hills in the north of the county are a conspicuous feature. There are also significant cutaway peatlands in the county, particularly swathes running along the northwest border of the county from Lough Sheelin to Ballymahon, along the southern border from Athlone to Clara, and along the eastern border from Tyrrellspass to Lislogher. There are also prominent esker systems (i.e., Athlone, Moate and Moyvore esker systems) in southwestern Westmeath between Athlone and Clara.

Westmeath is known as the Lakeland County, but its landscape includes a diversity of landscape types, ranging from rolling hills and lakes to peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, eskers and wetlands. The range of different landscapes found in Westmeath each have varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure and contain a variety of habitats. It is recognised that the landscape and lakes are key assets in sustaining a high quality of life for the residents of the county and an important sustainable tourism resource.

Westmeath is a county with considerable heritage and cultural assets, along with a scenic and rich natural environment. Coupled with the vibrant towns and villages and easily accessible location, it has high tourism potential. Westmeath is also one of the counties that is included in Ireland's Ancient East, an umbrella destination brand that will provide significant future opportunities. It is the third regional experience brand from Fáilte Ireland and includes the majority of County Westmeath, from Moate eastwards. The aim of the branding is to inspire visitors to travel to the Ireland's Ancient East by appealing to their interest in local culture and heritage. Westmeath has the potential to be promoted worldwide for its authentic and memorable heritage assets, where visitors can "discover a region of legends and stories, from ancient times to modern day". The county offers a rich heritage, with local storytellers who provide unforgettable tours of our ancient sites. Attractions include the Hill of Uisneach,



Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, Kilbeggan Distillery, Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, Moydrum Castle, Tullynally Castle gardens and Fore Abbey and Special Heritage Area.

The lakes and waterways of Westmeath are also connected with a rich heritage, including the famous legend of the Children of Lir associated with Lough Derravarragh. The Royal Canal traverses the county, with many preserved original bridges and locks visible to those who travel this route by boat, bike or foot and the Old Rail Trail Greenway brings visitors along the historic Great Western Railway line through the scenic Midlands landscape.

Westmeath is also part of Ireland's fourth regional tourism brand, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, which includes Athlone and the area surrounding the River Shannon and Lough Ree. It promises visitors a slow-paced experience, immersed in the natural environment and culture of the region. Activities such as walking, cycling, boat tours on the iconic River Shannon, bird-watching, fishing, and watersports are central to this theme.

The growing trend towards activity based tourism and adventure tourism also provides a significant opportunity for the county, and the county can capitalise on the growing demand for experiential holidays in a perceived 'wild' setting. Participation in adventure activities is becoming increasingly popular amongst visitors and includes the popular activities such as: walking and cycling; game and coarse angling; kayaking & canoeing; and golf and equestrian pursuits.

A total of 89 km of greenways have been developed in the county for the enjoyment of walkers and cyclists. The Royal Canal Greenway traverses the county via Mullingar and Old Rail Trail Greenway links Mullingar and Athlone. Both greenways interconnect in Mullingar and will form part of the Galway to Dublin, Coast to Coast Greenway and Eurovelo 2, an international-scale tourism offering, when complete in the coming years.

The Castlepollard Quarry is located in central north Westmeath c. 2 km southeast of Castlepollard, c. 5 km northwest of Collinstown, c. 8.5 km southeast of Multyfarnham, c. 13.5 km northwest of Delvin, c. 13.5 km southwest of Oldcastle, c. 15.5 km southwest of Mullingar, c. 17 km west of Clonmellon, c. 17 km southeast of Granard, c. 20 km east of Edgeworthstown, and c. 75 km from Dublin Airport and Port.

There are no community facilities near Deerpark, although there are numerous community and recreational facilities in the nearby villages and towns of Castlepollard, Collinstown, Multyfarnham, Delvin, and Oldcastle. The nearest such facilities are located in the town of Castlepollard c. 2 km northwest of the site.

Castlepollard has two national schools, a community college, a library, one Roman Catholic church, a community centre, five creches or Montessori schools, a nursing home, and a primary health centre. The town hosts County Council Offices, Post Office, Garda Station, Fore Station, Bank of Ireland and a large range of shops and services. Castlepollard also boasts a GAA club, soccer club, yoga hall and taekwondo gym. Whitehall is located c. 2.5 km to the southwest of the site, and has a national school, Roman Catholic church, a community centre, and GAA club. Collinstown is located c. 4.5 km to the southeast of the site, and has a national school, Roman Catholic church, a community centre and GAA club.

Deerpark and Castlepollard benefit from the many amenities and attractions located within the county, as well as being within easy reach of the vibrant Capital City of Dublin. The area contains numerous historical and archaeological sites, with clusters of Protected Structures at



Castlepollard, Tullynally Castle Demesne, Fore, Collinstown and Drumcree and Glananea Demesnes. The distribution of Recorded Monuments is largely dispersed but with distinct clusters at Fore and the northeast corner of Lough Derravaragh, where there is a series of crannogs.

Heritage attractions in Westmeath include: the Hill of Uisneach, Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, Kilbeggan Distillery, Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, Moydrum Castle, Tullynally Castle gardens and Fore Abbey and Special Heritage Area. Other attractions include the Mullingar Cathedral, Multyfarnham Friary, Dún na Sí Amenity & Heritage Park, Moate, and Mullaghmeen Forest Trails. The lakes and waterways of Westmeath have a rich heritage, particularly Lough Derravaragh with the legend of the Children of Lir. The Royal Canal traverses the county, and the route can be travelled by boat, bike or foot, while the Old Rail Trail Greenway brings visitors along the historic Great Western Railway line.

The natural environment and landscape of Westmeath contains many natural attractions, such as the northern hills around Castlepollard, the esker landscape in the southwest of the county, and the River Shannon and Lough Ree also in the southwest. There are significant cutaway peatlands, mainly clustered along the northwest, south and east borders of the county, while the River Shannon and the Royal Canal offer miles of navigable waterways for the more leisurely pursuit of cruising.

Golf enthusiasts visiting the area can enjoy a choice of excellent golf courses within a reasonable driving distance. These include: Ballinlough Castle Golf Club, Ballinlough, Mullingar Golf Club, Belvedere, Co. Westmeath, Headfort Golf Club, Kells, County Meath Golf Club, Trim, Mount Temple Golf Club, Mount Temple, Moate Golf Club, Moate, Moyvalley Golf Club, Moyvalley, and County Longford Golf Club, Longford. A 9-hole course is available at Virginia, while a pitch & put course is available nearby at Collinstown. Tennis is available at the Mullingar Tennis & Badminton Club, Mullingar, Grange Tennis Club, Grange, Co. Westmeath, Kells Tennis Club, Kells, and Longford Tennis Club, Longford.

Horse racing is available at Kilbeggan Racecourse, while greyhound racing is available at the Mullingar Greyhound Stadium. There are equestrian activities at numerous nearby equestrian centres, such as Derravara Equine Clinic and Gallop, Crookedwood, Culleen Equestrian, Mullingar, Ladestown Riding & Trekking Stables, Ladestown, the Mullingar Equestrian Centre, Mullingar, Croughal Stables, Loughnavalley, and Catherinestown Riding Stables, Gainestown.

There are numerous walking and cycling trails in the county, particularly the numerous trails at Mullaghmeen Forest—an isolated area of forest rising above the farm land in the northwest of the county, which is the largest planted beech forest in Ireland. There are numerous other trails, including: Esker Bluebell Trail, Kilbeggan; Lough Enell Walk, Carrick; Royal Canal Way between Mullingar and Kinnegad; Portlick Millennium Forest Castle; Old Rail Trail and Mullingar-Athlone Greenway; Delvin to Kilbeggan Trail; Burgess Park; Kilbeggan Greenway Walk, and more.

Angling is popular on the many lakes and rivers in the county, particularly for trout and pike, but also for salmon, bream, perch and tench.

Activity centres are available at Boycey Sports, Castlepollard, Kidz & Co, Mullingar, Rock 'n' Bowl, Mullingar, and Lilliput Adventure Centre, Lough Enell. A range of other activities are available at: Ambushed Paintball and Laser Tag, Gaybrook Demesne, Mullingar, Lakeland



Shooting Centre, Mullingar, Mullingar Gymnastic Club, Mullingar, and Barn Door Creative Studios, Bracklyn.

The Pollard Karting, Kinturk Demesne, Castlepollard, the Fore Motorcycle Club, Castlepollard, and the Westmeath & District Motor Club offer activities for motor enthusiasts.

There are a numerous festivals and events held throughout the year in the Westmeath, which act as significant visitor and tourism attractions, including the following notables:

- Delvin Book Festival, May
- Athlone's All-Ireland Drama Festival, May
- Oliver Goldsmith Festival, June
- Body&Soul. A 3 day celebration of the Summer Solstice featuring music, art & immersive experiences in the landscaped grounds of Ballinlough Castle, Clonmellon, June
- Streete Vintage Festival, Rathowen – one of the largest collections of vintage cars, commercial vehicles and motorcycles in the country, July
- Heritage Week - annual celebration of our natural, built and cultural heritage, August
- Moate Agricultural Show, August
- Rathowen Festival Weekend, August
- Clonmellon Potato Festival, September
- Culture Night - nationwide celebration of our arts, heritage and culture, where venues and public spaces offer a night of free entertainment, September
- Athlone Literary Festival, October
- Belvedere House Halloween Events, October

There are seven areas of high amenity designated in County Westmeath, and these are: Lough Sheelin, Lough Lene, Lough Derravaragh, Lough Owel, Lough Ennell, Lough Ree, and Hill of Uisneach. These areas are highly regarded for their amenity and recreational value and are afforded special protection under the County Development Plan. Deerpark lies within the Northern Hills & Lakes Landscape Character Area (LCA), which consists of prominent hills topped with chert or cherty limestone with enclosed lakes and areas of peat deposits. The LCA has a rural landscape of particularly high scenic quality containing a number of lakes with several preserved views, Lough Lene Area of High Amenity and Fore Special Heritage Area. The application area lies outside of the Lough Lene Area of High Amenity and is not within the Fore Special Heritage Area. The Council has identified 35 Protected Views across the county, but none of these views are located near or incorporate the application site.

The application site has restricted views from the surrounding countryside, mostly middle distance views from the northeast. No sites of archaeological importance, National Monuments, or protected structures listed in the Westmeath Development Plan 2021-2027 are located within the proposed development area.



Examination of the Record of Monuments and Places for Co. Westmeath indicated that there are no Recorded Monuments located within the application area (see EIAR Figure 12.1 and Appendix 12.1). There are several Recorded Monuments in the study area outside the application area.

The closest Recorded Monument to the application externally is WM007-035----a Hilltop enclosure in Ballany townland. This monument is located 0.58 km to the south-east of the application area and is considered too far distant to be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposal.

The remaining Recorded Monuments in the study area located at further distances from the application area and are considered to be too far distant to be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposal.

Examination of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) indicated that there are no SMR sites in the application area. There is one SMR in the study area outside the application area. WM007-134---- is an earthwork enclosure in Deerpark townland. This monument is located 0.6 km to the south-east of the application area and is considered too far distant to be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposal.

Westmeath County Council Planning Authority - Inspecting Purposes Only





#### 4.3.6 HUMAN HEALTH

This section describes the existing human environment in terms of the health and safety of the receiving population, as well as that of the workforce of the application site, which are protected by employment legislation, including principally the provisions of the “Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005”, and amendments and regulations made thereunder.

The constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (WHO 2018). Thus, any assessment of a proposed development should consider the potential impacts on physical, mental, and social health (IPH 2009). Public health pertains to the promotion and protection of health and well-being, prevention of ill-health, and prolongation of life, and emphasises a collective responsibility for the health of the population.

Health is determined by access to quality healthcare services, lifestyle choices, and the socioeconomic conditions in which people live (IPH 2009). The latter include many factors that lie outside the healthcare sector, such as housing, education, employment, transport, drinking water and sanitation, and access to high quality food. Thus, policies in ostensibly non-healthcare sectors can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of a population. There may also be significant health inequalities within a population, in that there are arbitrary disparities in health outcomes depending on socio-economic status. Individuals in higher socioeconomic groups are more likely to live longer and to experience good health longer than those in lower socioeconomic groups, while men and women experience notable differences in health outcomes. From a public policy perspective, addressing the social determinants of health can have positive impacts on health inequalities, and thus should inform the planning and development process.

Common concerns in terms of human health, particularly to vulnerable sections of the receiving population, with respect to developments such as the proposed project, are generally associated with noise, air quality, water contamination, traffic safety, and accidents and disasters. Consequently, human health impacts are assessed through these environmental factors, such that the human health of the receiving environment is primarily addressed here under the individual chapters dedicated to each of the relevant factors. Thus, in respect of human health, the baseline conditions associated with soil and land are described in Section 6, with groundwater in Section 7, with dust and air quality in Section 9, with noise and vibration in Section 10, and with roads & traffic in Section 14.

The primary residential and commercial receptors have been outlined in preceding sections. The immediate receptors were identified to determine the number of residential and commercial addresses within the vicinity of the proposed development. The residential development in the vicinity of Deerpark is low density, diffuse to clustered, consisting predominantly of owner-occupied bungalow/houses and farm dwellings along public roads and lanes. There are 42 residences in the immediate area (i.e., within 1 km) of the application site.

The closest large residential settlement to the site is Castlepollard, which is located c. 2 km to the northwest. There are 10 residences within 250 m, 16 within 500 m and 42 within 1 km of the site planning application boundary (Refer Figure 4.1). There are several clusters of residential dwellings located near the site. A cluster of 6 residences are located within 250 m on



the east side of the R395 across from the site entrance and north along the L5743 (i.e., nos. 5-10), while another cluster of 4 residences are located within 250 m west of the site adjacent to the drainage ditch into which it is proposed to discharge surface waters (i.e., nos. 1-4).

There are no occupied residences within the application site or landholding, and the closest is located c. 270 m northeast of the quarry extraction area.

There are no commercial properties within 1 km of the site, although there are numerous farms. The local farms are significant environmental receptors, not simply by way of being local residents, but also as land uses/economic enterprises.

There are recent and possibly active quarrying operations near Fore at Ankerland c. 5 km northeast of the site, while B.D. Flood operates the Crookedwood Quarry in Crookedwood c. 6.25 km to the south and Owens Quarry Products, at Gaulmoylestown, Knockdrin, c. 8 km to the south. Decotek Automotive have a large automotive parts manufacturing facility near Collinstown at Robinstown, c. 5 km to the southeast of the site. This facility employs over 320 employees. The closest concentration of commercial and industrial activities to the site is in the town of Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest, particularly at the Innova Business Park, petrol stations and other commercial facilities.

In order to ascertain the socio-economic and health status of the population in the local area around Deerpark, relevant statistics from the 2016 census have been compiled in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. The socioeconomic group of the reference person per household in the Kinturk ED and County Westmeath have been compiled in Table 4.5. The most striking feature of the table is the low level of employment in agriculture (i.e., < 1 %) despite the rural character of the Kinturk ED and county. It is apparent that the employer, managerial and professional groups represent 23.0 % of the population in the Kinturk ED, which compares with 30.9 % in County Westmeath. This demonstrates that approximately a quarter of the population of the Kinturk ED are from higher socioeconomic groups, which are typically advantaged in terms of education, housing, diet, lifestyle and access to healthcare services. Therefore, in view of the well-established correlation between socioeconomic status and good health, it would be expected that the population of the Kinturk ED would have moderate health.

From Table 4.6, it is apparent that persons with either good or very good health comprise 85.6 % of the population in the Kinturk ED, which is only slightly lower than the 87.3 % for County Westmeath. In addition, the old age dependency ratio of 24.9 % and average age of 39.0 for the Kinturk ED compares with 19.7 % and 36.8, respectively, for the county and 20.4 % and 37.4, respectively, for the State. These data indicate that the population of Kinturk is slightly, but significantly, older than that of the county and State. Furthermore, population growth in the Kinturk ED has been modest, having increased from 1,107 in 2002 to 1,341 in 2016—an increase of 21.1 % compared to 23.5 % for Westmeath (one of the lowest rates in Leinster) and 21.6% for the State in the same period. Thus, the population of Kinturk ED is slightly older yet relatively healthy and likely to be almost as resilient as the populations of County Westmeath and the State.

The receiving environment of the development is therefore characterised by a moderately slow growing population with a higher proportion of an older age cohort compared to county and national averages, but who are in somewhat good health.



Table 4.4 Socioeconomic Group of Reference Person in Household

Socio-Economic Group	Kinturk ED			County Westmeath		
	Households	Persons	%	Households	Persons	%
Employers and managers	58	159	12.1	3940	11796	13.4
Higher professional	15	37	2.8	1658	5029	5.7
Lower professional	50	106	8.1	3822	10342	11.8
Non-manual	76	182	13.9	5809	15807	18.0
Manual Skilled	44	113	8.6	2974	8746	10.0
Semi-skilled	75	212	16.1	2751	8042	9.2
Unskilled	23	61	4.6	1082	2983	3.4
Own account workers	32	85	6.5	1470	4430	5.0
Farmers	20	50	3.8	1773	4890	5.6
Agricultural workers	6	12	0.9	182	523	0.6
All others gainfully occupied and unknown	121	296	22.5	6352	15299	17.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>1313</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>31813</b>	<b>87887</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**Table 4.5 Populations by General Health and Age Dependency**

Health	Kinturk ED	(%)	County Westmeath	(%)
Very Good	727	54.1	51990	58.6
Good	423	31.5	25481	28.7
Fair	136	10.1	7303	8.2
Bad	20	1.5	1200	1.4
Very Bad	7	0.5	251	0.3
Not Stated	31	2.3	2545	2.9
Total	1344	100.0	88770	100.0
Average Age	39.0		36.8	
Young Dependency	30.0		34.3	
Old Dependency	24.9		19.7	
Total Age Dependency	54.9		54.0	

#### 4.3.7 SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

The surrounding lands are largely agricultural and held in pasture, although there are forestry plantations to the west and northwest. The site is bounded by a copse of trees on the eastern boundary and by hedgerows on the remaining boundaries, with stock fencing on the boundaries of the access road to the main site entrance. The access road extends from the northeastern corner of the main section of the site c. 130 m to the R395 Regional Road, where it has a 10 m frontage at the entrance.

Residential property in the area typically comprises one-off single residences and farmsteads along public roads and to a minor extent, along and at the end of lanes off the public roads.

There are numerous established individual residences, clusters of residences, hamlets or grays in the area with 42 residences within a 1 km radius of the quarry site (See EIAR Figure 4.1).

The closest large residential settlement to the site is Castlepollard, which is located c. 2 km to the northwest. There are 10 residences within 250 m, 16 within 500 m and 42 within 1 km of the site planning application boundary (Refer Figure 4.1). There are several clusters of residential dwellings located near the site. A cluster of 6 residences are located within 250 m on the east side of the R395 across from the site entrance and north along the L5743 (i.e., nos. 5-10), while another cluster of 4 residences are located within 250 m west of the site adjacent to the drainage ditch into which it is proposed to discharge surface waters (i.e., nos. 1-4).

There are no occupied residences within the application site, and the closest is located c. 270 m northeast of the quarry extraction area. There has been a long historical association with quarrying at this location and consideration has been given to screening of the development and phasing of working with respect to receptors.

There are no community facilities within 1 km of the site, the nearest being the Maple Court Nursing Home and Little Friends Montessori on the outskirts of Castlepollard c. 1.1 km from the site. There are no industrial or commercial developments within 1 km of the site, the nearest being a petrol station on the outskirts of Castlepollard c. 1.1 km from the site. Thus, the number of sensitive receptors primarily relates to residences 5-10 (Refer to Figure 4.1), which lie within 250 m of the site and some have partial views of the quarry workings.

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#### 4.4 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

The following Impact Assessment matrix (Refer Table 4.7) provides an indication of the significance of potential effects arising during the life cycle of the development not accounting for any mitigation measures.

The operation of the quarry at Castlepollard arises from the continued demand of human beings to have their buildings, roads and structures, modified and improved. The supply of construction materials is therefore essential to the aspirations and material progress of humans and their settlements and infrastructure.

Potential negative impacts on human beings and amenity of the area arising from the development relate mainly to nuisance from noise, dust, water pollution, traffic and visual intrusion. The following sections of this report provide detailed information on these potential impacts and mitigation measures proposed.

Although Deerpark is a rural location, it is strategically located on the R395 and c. 12.5 km north of the N4 as it by-passes north of Mullingar. The N4 is one of the principal radial arterial road and economic corridors in the State, connecting Dublin with Mullingar, Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon and Sligo, as well as Castlebar via the N5. The site lies within a catchment area with numerous small to large settlements, such as Castlepollard, Collinstown, Multyfarnham, Delvin, Oldcastle, Mullingar, Clonmellon, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Killucan, Kilnaleck, Ballyjamesduff, Virginia, and Athboy.

'Do Nothing' Impacts	<b>X</b>		
Factors	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Direct Impacts		●	●
Indirect Impacts		●	<b>X</b>
Cumulative Impacts		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Residual Impacts		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
'Worst Case' Impacts		●	●

None/imperceptible: **X**; Slight: ●; Moderate: ●; Significant/Very significant: ●.

Refer to Appendix 3 for definition of Significance

The impact on human beings resulting from the proposed commencement of quarry operations is assessed here, and possible mitigation measures proposed to reduce any significant impacts. The general guidance on baseline environment and impacts given in Appendix 3 identifies the levels of impacts which are used here in order to evaluate the



significance of potential impacts resulting from the proposed continuance of quarrying. These impact ratings are in accordance with impact assessment criteria provided in EPA (2015; 2017).

There are a number of potential environmental impacts associated with the quarry that may directly, or indirectly, affect the local “human” environment. These potential impacts and the mitigation measures proposed are described in the following sections of this report under the headings detailed below:

- Biodiversity – Section 5
- Land, Soils & Geology – Section 6
- Water – Section 7
- Air Quality – Section 9
- Noise– Section 10
- Landscape – Section 11
- Cultural Heritage – Section 12
- Material Assets – Sections 13
- Traffic & Roads – 14

#### 4.4.1 ‘DO-NOTHING’ IMPACTS

If the development did not proceed, the aggregate resource would remain unused in situ, and the local supply of quality aggregates would be more restricted. Under the ‘Do Nothing’ scenario, all quarrying and ancillary activities would cease. The site would be restored as per the requirements of the existing planning permission (P.A. Ref. 01/525).

Terminating the operation of the quarry would miss the opportunity to maintain local jobs in the area, and thus would have a direct negative impact on the local human environment.

#### 4.4.2 DIRECT IMPACTS

Potential impacts on human beings can arise out of the construction and decommissioning phases, but particularly the operational phase of the quarry development, and these include noise, dust, water quality, visual impact, traffic and safety (Refer to Table 4.8 below).

##### 4.4.2.1 Land Use

As a quarry has been intermittently active at the Deerpark site since the early 1900s, was in full production since the granting of the current permission in 2002, continuation of the quarry operations for the extraction of aggregate, represents a minimal impact in the context of change in land use. The quarry has had a number of mitigation measures with respect to screening and landscaping, environmental management and monitoring put in place to ensure that operations do not result in significant impacts on the surroundings, including the human environment.



The site has a long history of quarrying, and these activities have co-existed with other land uses in the area, particularly medium intensity agriculture. On completion of site activities, the site of the quarry will be decommissioned and left safe and secure. Furthermore, the quarry will be restored in accordance with an approved restoration scheme, and thus integrated back into the surrounding landscape with the attendant improvement to the visual amenity of the area.

#### 4.4.2.2 Population and Settlement

It is not anticipated that the quarry operations will result in any change in population. However, the development will have a positive impact with respect to supporting and maintaining the workforce in the area for the duration of quarrying activities.

#### 4.4.2.3 Economy & Employment

The quarry has contributed indirectly to sustaining and developing the local and regional economy through the supply of building products, and has provided employment for local people, both directly and indirectly. The quarry will directly employ 2 people, while indirect employment, including local hauliers and contractors, will also be generated. It is anticipated that indirect employment, i.e., those people who rely directly upon the quarry and the associated business for their earnings, will amount to a further 5 people.

#### 4.4.2.4 Social Consideration

The quarry operations have provided a valuable and necessary resource to the county and wider region.

The Company has established an environmental management system (EMS) designed to comply with the environmental requirements of the ISO 14001:2015 standard and the Quality Management requirements of ISO 9001:2015 (Refer to EIAR Section 3.3.3.1.2). A copy of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Castlepollard Quarry is included in Appendix 10. This will be updated in accordance with any new planning consents or licences.

There are no community facilities within 1 km of the site, the nearest being the Maple Court Nursing Home and Little Friends Montessori on the outskirts of Castlepollard c. 1.1 km from the site. There are no other community facilities within close proximity of the quarry, with the next nearest being those in Castlepollard further than 1.5 km northwest of the site.

There would have been a sustained level of HGV traffic for the duration of quarry operations while the development was open prior to the collapse of the construction industry during the Global Financial Crisis.

At the quarry access junction on the R395, when travelling to/from the quarry, it is anticipated that development traffic will be split 50:50 to the northwest and southeast for arrivals and departures. As such, site traffic will be able to use the regional and national road networks for the bulk of the journeys to customer sites and thus will likely have negligible impact on local road networks and sensitive receptors. The proposed main haulage route is shown on Figure 1.1. The posted speed limit on the R395 at, and on the approaches to the quarry access, is 80 kph.





The R395 Regional Road in the vicinity of the quarry site entrance is approximately 6 m wide with no footways or hard strips. The pavement is in good condition, and will be reviewed with the Roads Section of Westmeath County Council at an agreed frequency.

There is a well set-back (c. 30 m), splayed, and paved entrance with large heavy-duty lockable metal gates. Hedge lines and verges will be regularly maintained by the developer in order to maintain achievable sight distances at the site entrance of at least c. 160 m in both directions along the R395 at a distance of 3 m back from the hard shoulder edge for an object height of 1.05 m above road level at the entrance (Refer to Site Layout Figure 3.1).

The volume of traffic generated by the proposed development will result in an average daily vehicle flow of 44 vehicles, 32 of which would be HGVs. The traffic impact of the quarry site on the R395 will result in an increase in traffic on the network, but this increase is considered negligible. The projected increase in traffic due to the quarry site is between 0.83% and 0.99% of the total traffic on the R395, given the present and forecasted levels of activity at the quarry (Refer to EIAR Tables 14.5 and 14.6). The existing capacity of the adjacent road network has been shown to comfortably accommodate these minor increases.

#### 4.4.2.5 Amenity, Tourism & Recreation

There are no major tourism attractions in the immediate vicinity (< 2 km) of the quarry. There are numerous attractions and amenities in northern County Westmeath, but all of these are relatively remote to the quarry, and therefore will not be impacted upon. The site lies just beyond the extreme margin of the Fore Special Heritage Area, despite Fore being located c. 4 km to the northeast of the site on the opposite side of Lough Lene. An intervening ridge line obscures all possible views of the site from the Lough Lene High Amenity area and the monastic complex at Fore.

Traffic entering and leaving the site will use the established quarry site access. The R395 regional road servicing the site is generally in good condition and is considered suitable for the expected volumes of HGV traffic. The site entrance has been adequately set-back and splayed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. Further details with respect to the impact and mitigation of traffic are contained within this report (Refer to Section 14).

There has been a long historical association with quarrying at this location and consideration has been given to screening of the development, phasing and direction of working with respect to receptors to reduce visual impact, while impacts due to noise and dust are substantially attenuated.

The quarry does not lie on a designated scenic route, nor is it visible from any of the designated scenic routes and viewpoints within the wider area around Deerpark (< 7 km; Westmeath County Council 2017). The hill into which the development has been driven forms a screen to views from the west and south. It is considered that the development will not have any significant visual impact on the views and prospects in the county.

The visual impact of the quarry is discussed in more detail in Section 11 - Landscape. However, upon decommissioning, the site will be restored in accordance with an approved restoration scheme for the quarry so that the site is assimilated in a planned manner back into the landscape in the long term.



#### 4.4.2.6 Property Values

Historically, the local authority used the lands at Deerpark for rock extraction, which ceased in the 1970s.

Byrne (2001) noted that there was a history of quarry workings in the area, and that since 1908, when the quarry at Deerpark opened, local people were involved in the various quarrying regimes that took place until its closure in the 1980s. Byrne considered that reopening the quarry at the time would have no significant impact on residential property and land prices. The visual impact would not be significant as the quarry face already dominated the then existing topography.

P. Clarke & Sons Ltd. re-opened the quarry in 2002. Lagan acquired the leasehold interest in the quarry in 2017. Thus, the site has a history of quarrying extending back to the 1900s having co-existed with other land uses in the area, such that property values should be unaffected by the continuation of quarrying. The asphalt plant has been decommissioned and removed from the site, reducing the visual impact of site infrastructure.

On completion of site activities, the site of the quarry will be decommissioned and left safe and secure. Furthermore, the quarry will be restored in accordance with an approved restoration scheme, and thus integrated back into the surrounding landscape with the attendant improvement to the visual amenity of the area.

#### 4.4.2.7 Human Health

Common concerns in terms of human health, particularly to vulnerable sections of the receiving population, with respect to developments such as the proposed project, are generally associated with noise, air quality, water contamination, traffic safety, and accidents and disasters. Any impacts arising with respect to these environmental factors are addressed under the relevant chapters where relevant. i.e.

- Land, Soils & Geology – Section 6
- Water – Section 7
- Climate - Section 8
- Air Quality – Section 9
- Noise & Vibration – Section 10
- The Landscape – Section 11
- Cultural Heritage – Section 12
- Material Assets – Section 13
- Roads & Traffic – Section 14

On completion of site activities, the quarry site will be decommissioned and left safe and secure. Furthermore, the site will be reinstated in accordance with the approved quarry restoration scheme, and thus integrated back into the surrounding landscape with the attendant improvement to the visual amenity of the area (Refer to EIAR Figures 3.2 and 3.3). The restoration of the site to beneficial after-use will result in a moderate positive effect in the medium term.



Industrial accidents involving dangerous substances pose a significant threat to humans and the environment, both on and off the site of the accident. The Seveso Directive (Directive 82/501/EEC) was adopted in 1982 for the purpose of prevention and control of such major accidents and was amended in 1996 (Seveso II Directive 96/82/EC) and again in 2012 (Seveso III Directive 2012/18/EU). The Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 209 of 2015) (the “COMAH Regulations”), implement the Seveso III Directive. Under the Regulations, there are two tiers of establishment, i.e., upper tier and lower tier, which are related to the quantities of dangerous substances present and allow tiered controls on the operators of establishments subject to the regulations.

There are no upper tier establishment in County Westmeath, while there is one lower tier establishment, namely Ecolab Ltd., Mullingar Industrial Estate, Mullingar, c. 17.5 km to the southwest. It is considered that at such a stand-off distance, the Castlepollard Quarry is not at risk of such accidents. Furthermore, the quarry lies in a sparsely populated, rural area, where the nearest industrial development is the Decotek Automotive manufacturing facility near Collinstown c. 5 km to the southeast, indicating that the site is not vulnerable to major accidents or disasters.

The COMAH Regulations also do not apply to the quarry site itself, as the proposed development only relates to the extraction and processing of inert materials. Details with respect accident and emergency response are addressed in EIAR Section 3.3.5 and mitigation measures are proposed (Refer to EIAR Section 4.5 below).

The greater risk of accident probably arises from the nature of the quarrying activities on-site. However, the design, construction and operation of the proposed development will be carried out in accordance with all relevant Irish and European legislation/regulations governing safety in the workplace. In particular, specific regard will be given to the regulations implemented under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and amendments and regulations made thereunder, including the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 291 of 2013), as amended. A ‘Health & Safety Plan’ has been implemented for the development in accordance with the regulations.

A copy of the Company’s Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statement is also attached (Refer to Appendix 5). Lagan are committed to preventing injuries and work-related ill-health by achieving and maintaining the highest standards of health, safety and wellbeing, through continuous improvement and the promotion and sharing of good practice.



#### 4.4.2.8 Other

There are no recorded archaeological, architectural or cultural heritage features within the area of land take.

There will be no direct impacts on any known items of archaeology, cultural heritage or buildings of heritage or special architectural interest in the application area or the vicinity.

The impact of extraction will not result in any significant loss of heritage values in the locality. In the medium to long term, the site will be restored in accordance with an approved restoration scheme for the quarry.

No direct impacts warranting specific mitigation were identified during the course of the cultural heritage assessment. Due to the possibility of the survival of previously unknown sub-surface archaeological deposits or finds within the application area, all topsoil-stripping in this area should be monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

As a result of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated in the design, no significant, adverse residual impacts on the archaeological, architectural or cultural heritage resource are predicted during the operational phase.

It is considered that following full restoration and closure of the site that there will be no significant, long-term, adverse impacts in terms of cultural heritage. The restored quarry will provide a more manageable environment than is currently the case, but with a change in land-use from the original agricultural use to mineral extraction to ultimately a future beneficial use as a wildlife amenity.



**Table 4.7 Direct Impacts by Stage of Development**

Direct Impact	Construction Stage	Operational Stage	Decommissioning Stage
Human Health (Employment)	Imperceptible, temporary, negative due to contractors entering/ exiting site during construction works.	Moderate, medium to long term, positive for quarry employees and hauliers.	Long term, moderate, negative due to closure.
Human Health (Safety)	Imperceptible, temporary, negative due to contractors entering/ exiting site during construction works.	Imperceptible medium to long term, negative due to quarry operations.	Imperceptible, negative due to demolition and removal of plant and infrastructure off-site.
Water Quality	None.	No adverse effect on groundwater flow, local groundwater wells or the downstream regional receptors	Long term, neutral as quarry dewatering ceases.
Noise	Slight, temporary, negative due to contractors entering/ exiting site during construction works.	Long-term, slight, negative due to continued operation of the quarry.	Slight, temporary, negative becoming positive as final restoration of the quarry is achieved.
Dust	Slight, occasional negative due to construction works.	Slight, occasional, negative largely confined to the site area	Slight, occasional negative becoming positive as final restoration of the quarry is achieved.
Visual Amenity	Moderate, medium to long term, negative as extraction extends to southeast.	Moderate, medium to long term, negative as extraction extends to southeast.	Significant, long term, positive as site is progressively restored to beneficial after-use.
Traffic	Not significant, temporary, negative due to contractors entering/ exiting site during construction works.	Not significant, medium to long term, negative due to HGV entering/ exiting site delivering product to market.	Not significant, short term, negative becoming positive as final restoration works are completed.

#### 4.4.3 INDIRECT IMPACTS

Apart from the direct impact of the deposition of particulate material, there may be an associated slight occasional negative visual impact with fugitive dust generation. This impact will be minimised by both the mitigation measures described to minimise dust in EIAR Section 9.6, and those described to minimise visual impacts in Section 11.

There will be no other significant indirect impacts associated with the operation of the quarry.



#### 4.4.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

There are several small quarries in the Ankerland area c. 5.5 km northeast of the site, while the B.D. Flood operates a large quarry at Crookedwood c. 6.5 km southwest of the site and Owens Quarry Products operate a large quarry at Gaulmoylestown, Knockdrin, c. 8 km to the southwest. The only significant industrial/commercial activity within 5 km of the site is the Decotek Automotive manufacturing plant near Collinstown, and the Innova Business Park in Castlepollard.

There are no significant projects, quarries, commercial or industrial facilities in close proximity to the site. As such it is considered there is no significant cumulative impact with respect to the operation of the quarry.

#### 4.4.5 TRANSBOUNDARY IMPACTS

The EIA Directive 2014-52-EU invokes the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, 1991, and applies its definition of transboundary impacts (Refer Appendix 8.1). Given the location (c. 50 km from the border with N. Ireland), nature, size and scale of the proposed development, it is expected that the impacts of the development would not have any significant transboundary effects on population and human health.

#### 4.4.6 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

As a result of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated in the design, no significant, negative residual impacts are predicted in terms of Population and Human Health on the local residences, their property, livestock or amenity during the operational phase.

Following full restoration and closure of the site that there will also be no significant negative impacts in terms of the Population and Human. The restored quarry will provide a more quiescent environment than is currently the case, but with a change in land-use from the original agricultural use to mineral extraction to ultimately a future beneficial use as a wildlife amenity.

#### 4.4.7 'WORST CASE' IMPACTS

A possible worst case impact would have been significant long term if the quarry was developed in an uncontrolled manner with no consideration given to the provision of screening of the development along the eastern boundary, resulting in the removal of the copse of trees on the flanks of the hill. This would have opened up the quarry from views from the east and would have had a significant adverse impact on amenity and local ecology and biodiversity. However, consideration was given to the protection of biodiversity values and screening, as well as progressive restoration and final restoration of the quarry site once operations at the site cease (Refer to EIAR Sections 3.4 and 11.6 and EIAR Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

Hydrological survey of receiving waters capacity suggests that the proposed discharge rate can be accommodated with no risk of flooding. Hydrochemical assimilation capacity



simulation of the receiving waters capacity suggests that discharge to the Deerpark stream to the northwest of the site, for the worst-case scenario maximum discharge volume of 170 m<sup>3</sup>/d (0.002 m<sup>3</sup>/s) can be accommodated at the mixing point with the Yellow (Castlepollard)\_030 when the river is at its lowest flow condition, which is the calculated equivalent low flow 95%tile flow rate, and compliance with the Surface Water Regulation's Good Status Environmental Quality Objectives (2009, as amended) is maintained. In fact, the maximum worst case, end of development discharge volume, can be accepted by the receiving water and cause no increase at all in the resultant concentrations for the range of simulated ELVs, which were selected based on iterative simulations using the DoEHLG (2011) mass balance method, as specified in the Guidance to Local Authorities in the Licensing of Discharges to Surface Waters (Refer to Section 7).

The worst case impact would be occasional generation of dust from crushing and screening of aggregates and internal haul roads in the absence of dust suppression resulting in negative slight effects on the immediate surrounds. Various mitigation measures will be implemented to minimise any impacts as much as practical to ensure the operation of the quarry will not result in any significant impact on residences or local amenities (Refer to EIAR Section 9.6).

The existing quarry development is the worse-case scenario given that the processing plant will be relocated further to the southeast within the shelter of the quarry void as quarrying progresses and suggests any impact with respect to noise emissions will be occasional, long-term, slight, negative due to the continued operation of the quarry. The closest noise sensitive locations are also close to the R395 road and the some of the existing measured ambient noise levels here already exceed the noise levels from the development.

Various mitigation measures will be implemented to minimise all noise emissions as much as possible, and to ensure noise emissions at the operation continue to remain below specified limits. As a result of these measures, there will not be any significant impact on residences or local amenities (Refer to EIAR Section 10.6.1).

Another worst-case impact would be a traffic accident involving HGV truck associated with the proposed development. Following an assessment of road collisions recorded between 2005 and 2016, one collision was identified approximately 110 m north of the existing quarry access on the R395. This was a Serious Injury collision, involving a car and occurred in 2016, resulting in four casualties. The collision occurred on a Saturday between 7 pm and 11 pm (outside of the quarries operating hours). This recorded collision data suggests that the HGV traffic from the existing quarry had no impact on road safety on the R395. As such, there is no evidence to suggest that future collisions involving quarry traffic is likely. (See Section 14 Roads & Traffic).

## 4.5 MITIGATION & MONITORING

With regard to the human beings, there are no mitigations proposed beyond normal site management including phasing and site restoration of the quarry. Mitigation measures with regard to environmental issues, such as water quality, air quality, noise, traffic and visual impacts, will be provided for and are described in detail under the relevant sections (See list in Table 4.1 above). Any impact on the natural environment will be mitigated against to the



greatest degree practical, thereby minimising any associated impact on the “human” environment.

The mitigation measures that relate to the human environment, and the sensitive receptors in particular, mainly involve water, air, noise and vibration, landscape and traffic. As the proposed development relates to the continuation of extraction at an existing quarry, with extension to depth, there will be a minimal requirement for a construction stage and attendant mitigation measures. During the operational stage, mitigation measures proposed by the operator and those conditioned by the Planning Authority will be in effect and controlled and monitored by the Environmental Management System (EMS) and environmental monitoring programme. During the closure and decommissioning stage, the site will be restored to beneficial after-use, and no additional mitigation measures are proposed.

The Company has established an environmental management system (EMS) designed to comply with the environmental requirements of the ISO 14001:2015 standard and the Quality Management requirements of ISO 9001:2015 (Refer to EIAR Section 3.3.3.3). A copy of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Castlepollard Quarry is included in Appendix 10. This will be updated in accordance with any new planning consents or licences. The EMP addresses such matters as Emergency Preparedness & Response in dealing with accident and emergency situations resulting in effects on the environment (Refer to EIAR Section 3.3.5).

A copy of the Company’s Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy Statement is also attached (Refer to Appendix 5). Lagan are committed to preventing injuries and work-related ill-health by achieving and maintaining the highest standards of health, safety and wellbeing, through continuous improvement and the promotion and sharing of good practice.

The applicant, Lagan, has established an environmental monitoring programme for the quarry site. The programme allows for on-going monitoring of environmental emissions (e.g., noise, dust, blasting and water) from the site, thereby assisting in ensuring compliance with requirements or regulations. The results of this monitoring will be made available to Westmeath County Council on a regular basis, where members of the public may examine it. The monitoring programme is sufficiently robust to ensure compliance with any conditions attached to a decision to grant planning permission.

The development will be controlled and regularised in accordance with the scheme as outlined in this document, through continued environmental monitoring and by planning conditions imposed by the competent authority. The proposal will have no major and/or long-term effect on the human environment.

It is, and has been, the policy of the operator to ensure the health and welfare of its employees by maintaining a safe, clean and tidy working environment, and employing safe working procedures that accord with the requirements of employment legislation, regulations, and best work practices in the industry.

Access to the site has and will be restricted at all times, and all visitors and contractors will undergo a site induction before entering the site. The wearing of protective clothing, such as footwear, helmets and high visibility clothing, will be mandatory in operational areas. Careful attention will be paid to safe practices when carrying out machinery maintenance and ensuring appropriate guarding of moving parts.





Adequate fencing, signage and other barriers have been erected around the existing site for the safety of the general public and to prevent livestock straying into the development. Large lockable gates are in place to guard against unauthorised and unsupervised entry to the site outside of working hours.

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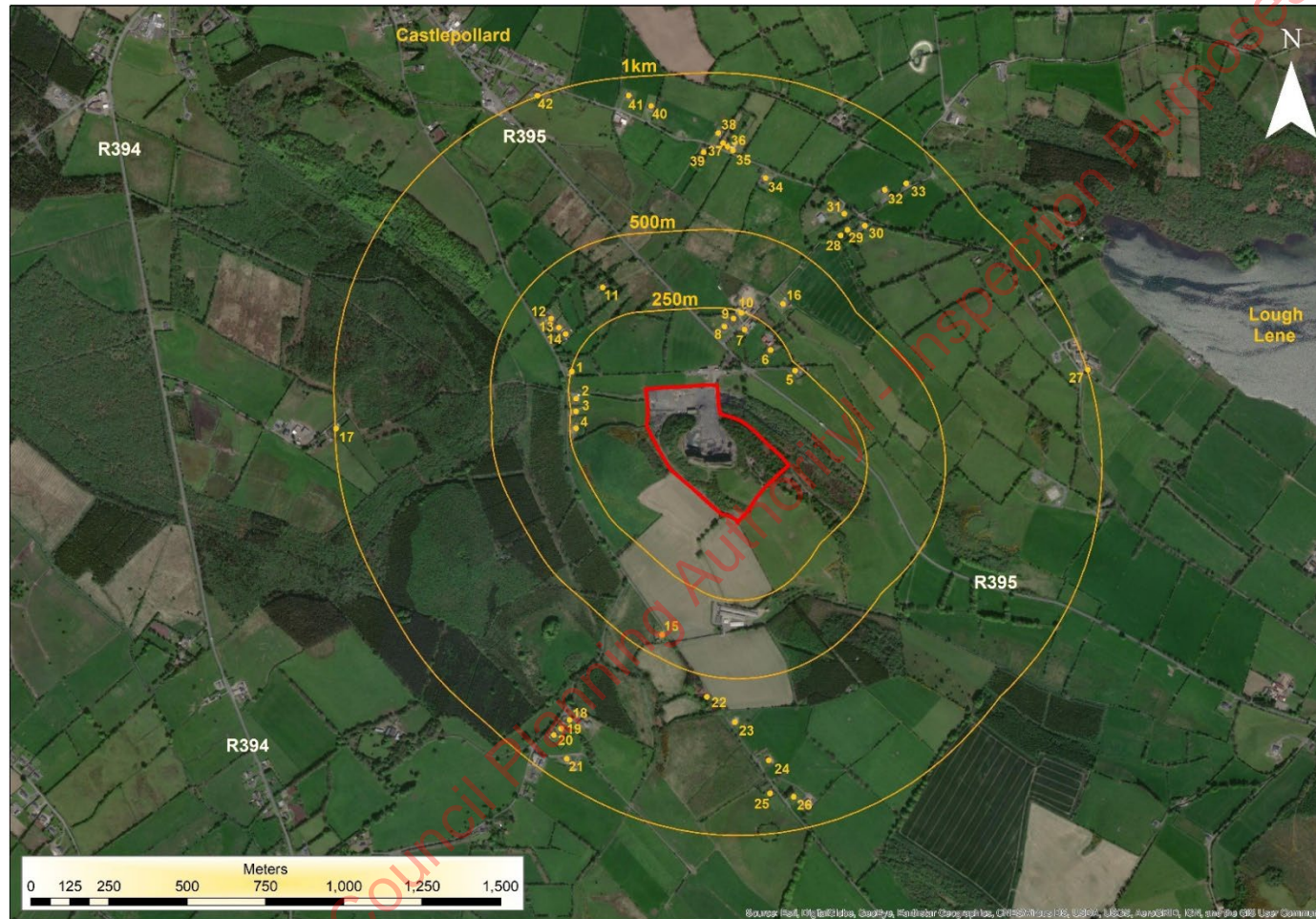
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4.7 FIGURES

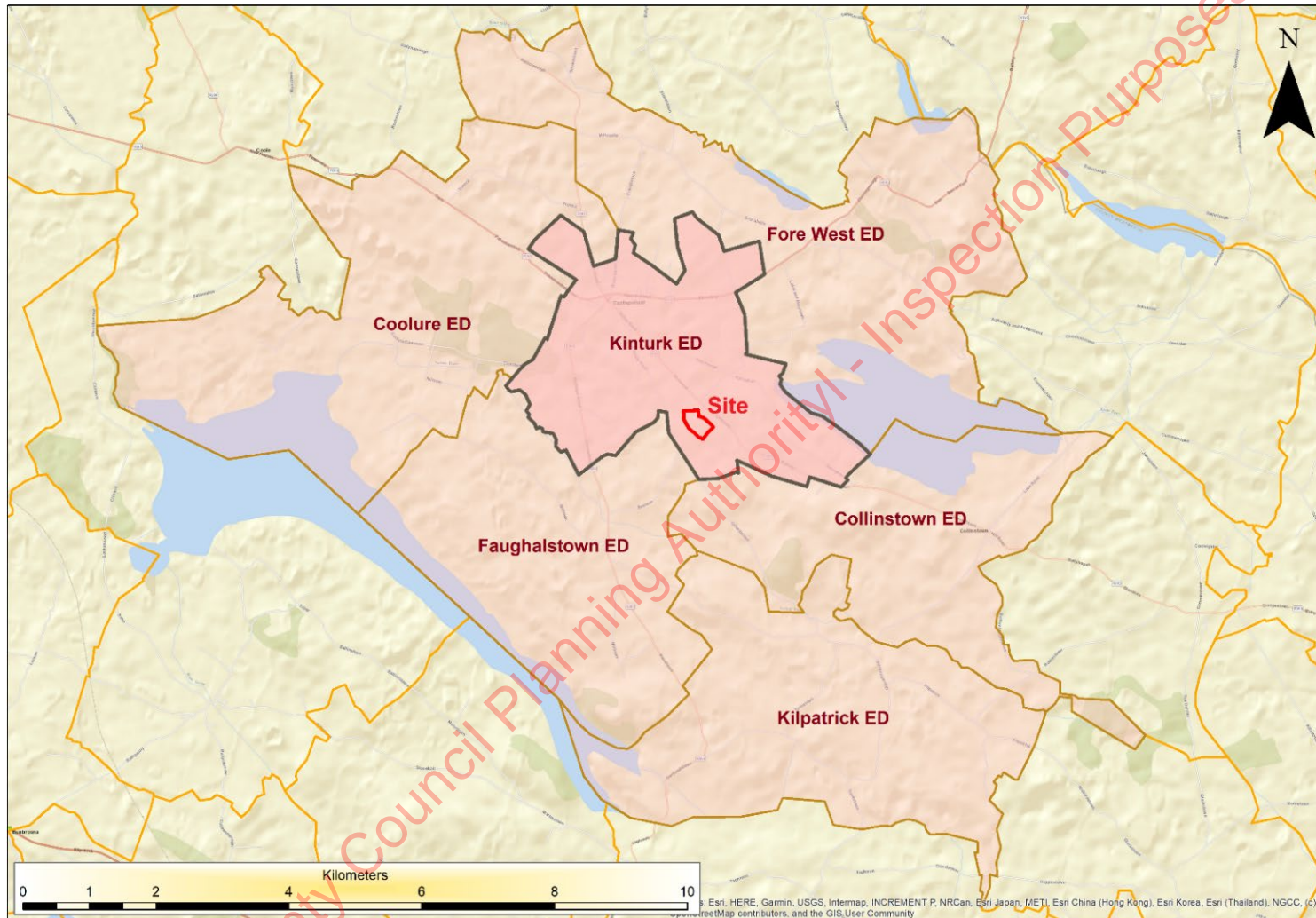
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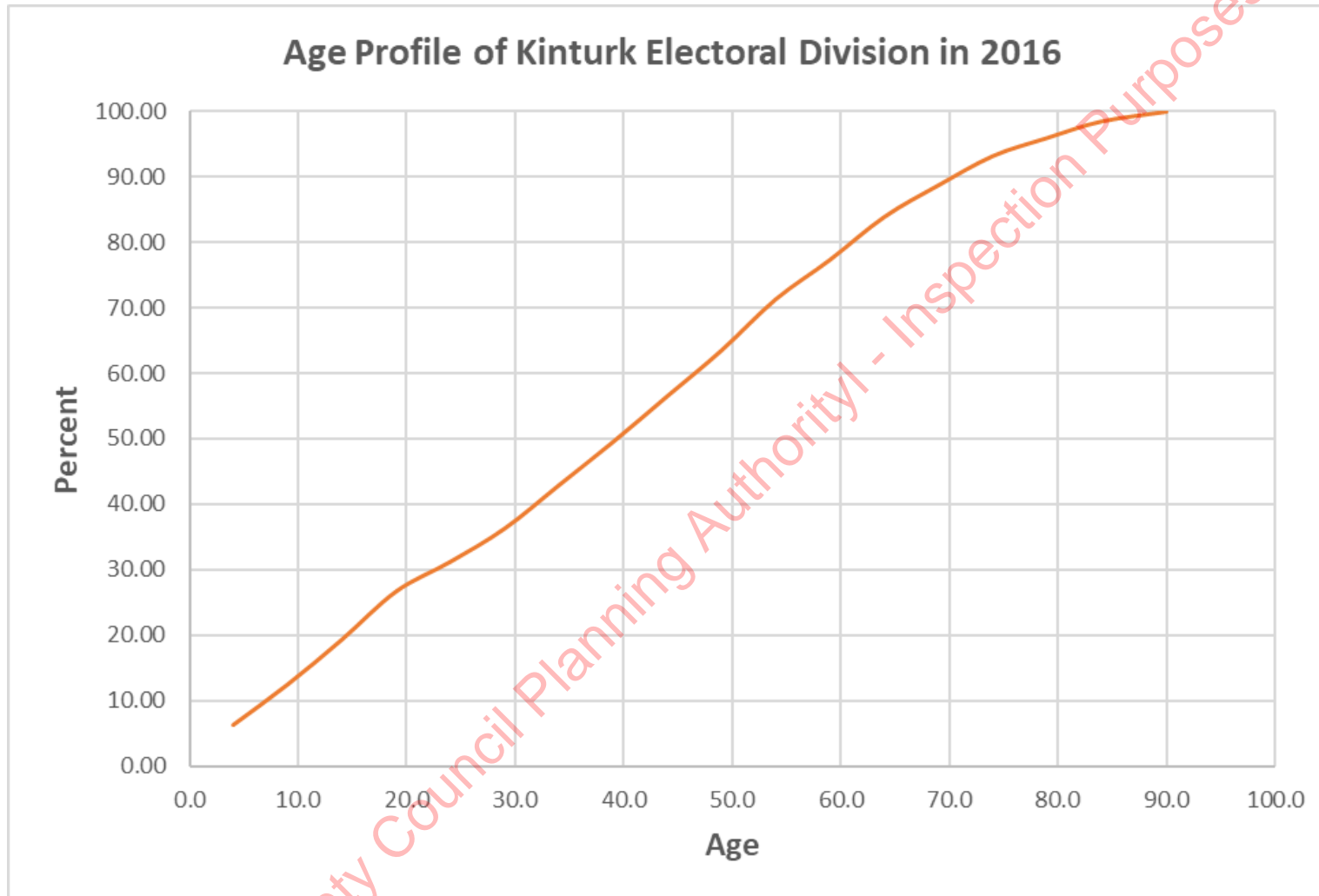
**Figure 4.1 Aerial Image of Area around Castlepollard Quarry.**

Red line denotes boundary of landholding. Yellow dots denote residences within 250 m (n = 10), 500 m (n = 16), and 1 km (n = 42) limits. Note proximity to R395 Regional Road and Castlepollard - outskirts shown at upper left centre of image. Note residence no. 5, which is located c. 160 m east of the site, belongs to the landowner Mr. & Mrs. Ned Smyth. Rendered in ArcGIS 10.3 using aerial image from ESRI's world imagery.



**Figure 4.2 Map of Kinturk Electoral Division (ED) and Local Area comprised of surrounding EDs.**

Rendered in ArcGIS 10.3 using aerial image from ESRI's world imagery and data from CSO.



**Figure 4.3 Age Profile of Kinturk Electoral Division in 2016.**

Note average age of 39.0 at the 50 percentile. Data from CSO.

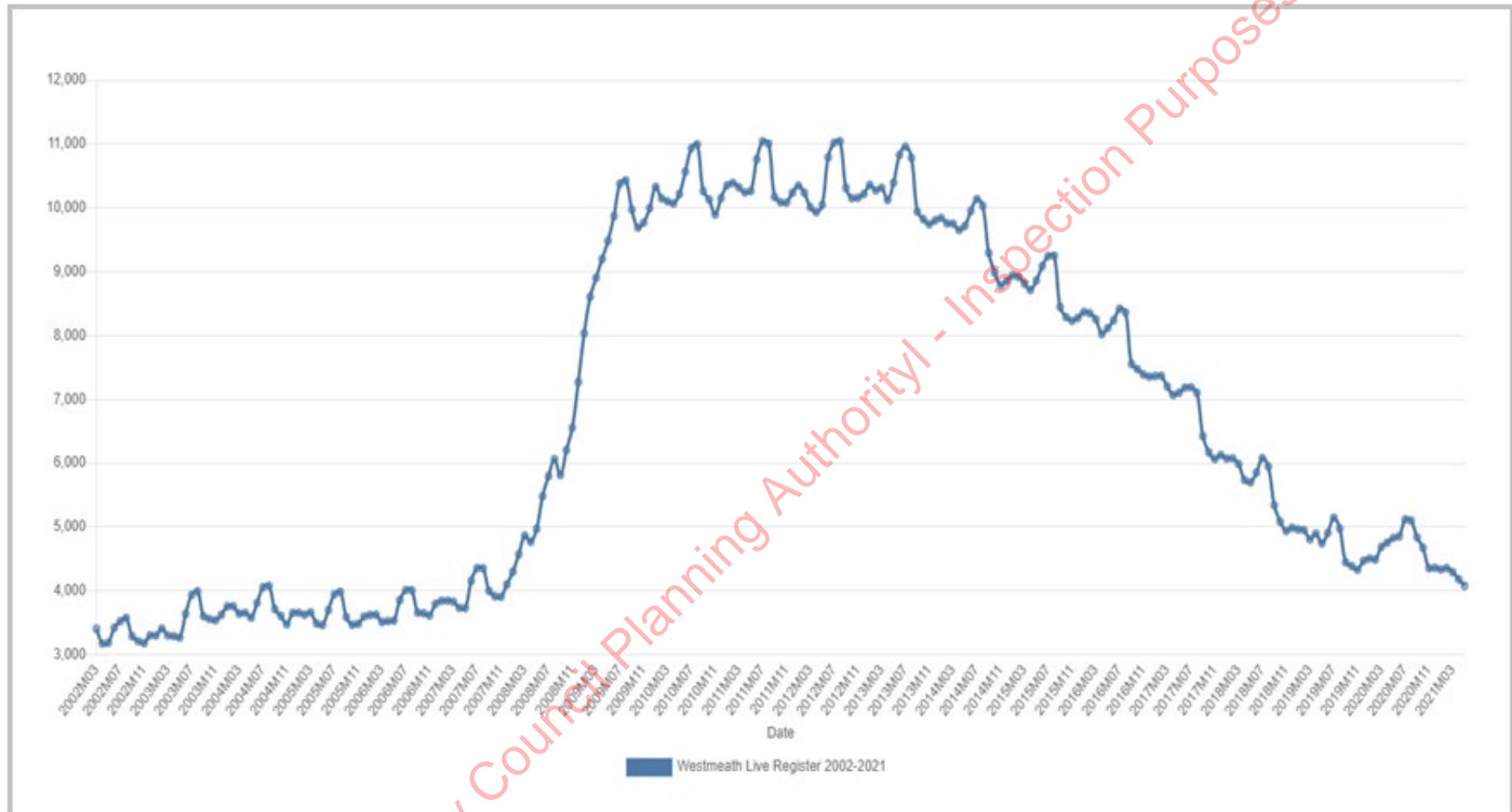


Figure 4.4 Chart showing Profile of Live Register for County Westmeath

Data spans period from March 2002 to March 2021, including Global Financial Crisis. Data from CSO.