

Castlepollard Quarry, Deerpark, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath

Castlepollard Quarry

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Section 13

Material Assets

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13 MATERIAL ASSETS

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the EIAR provides an overview of the material and amenity resources within the vicinity of the proposed development, coupled with an assessment of the potential impact, if any, of the development on the existing environment in respect of these assets.

The assessment of economic assets tends to be concerned with ensuring their equitable and sustainable use, whereas the assessment of cultural assets tend to be concerned with securing their integrity and continuity, and their necessary context. Key issues of residential development, amenity, land use, roads and utility services are addressed. Natural resources of economic value (Refer to Table 13.1 below) which are also considered as material assets, are dealt with where necessary in their respective EIAR sections (EPA 2015).

Material Assets is considered to include architectural and archaeological heritage and cultural heritage. For the purpose of this EIAR, an assessment of the potential impact, if any, of the development on the existing environment with respect to these assets is considered in EIAR Section 12 Section - Cultural Heritage.

Material assets may be defined as resources that are valued and that are intrinsic to specific places, and may be either human or natural origin, and the value may arise from either economic or cultural reasons (EPA 2015). The developments utilisation of, or proximity to, the area's material assets, can directly and indirectly result in potential environmental impacts. Therefore, the objective of this assessment is to identify the material assets of the area, determine the potential impacts of the proposed continuance or recommencement of quarrying operations on these assets, and propose mitigation measures where necessary to ensure that they are addressed in an appropriate manner. This section also indicates the associated sections within the EIAR that consider these impacts and any proposed mitigation measures.

13.2 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

13.2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are no policies, plans, acts, regulations or technical standards that are specific to this chapter.

13.2.2 GUIDANCE

There is no specific guidance on Material Assets other than, in respect of the preparation of EIARs, the EPA's Draft Advice Notes for Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EPA 2015).



13.3 METHODOLOGY

The assessment of material assets has been prepared in accordance with the Advice Notes for Preparing Environmental Impact Statements, Draft, published by the EPA (EPA 2015). Table 13.1 outlines the categories of assets, which the EPA suggests may need to be examined as part of the material assets study.

On the basis of categories in and the nature of the proposed development, the material assets that could potentially be impacted by the quarry, and which have been identified for assessment are: (1) non-renewable resources (minerals, soils); (2) settlement - residential development; (3) land use; (4) transport infrastructure; (5) built services; (6) waste management infrastructure (7) cultural assets - archaeological, historic and architectural heritage; and (8) landscape and natural heritage. Most of these assets have been considered elsewhere within other sections of the EIAR, as indicated below:

- Settlement, Commercial & Industrial Development, Property, Tourism & Recreational Infrastructure and land use are discussed in Section 4 – Population & Human Health;
- Natural Heritage is discussed in Section 5 – Biodiversity;
- Non-renewable resources (minerals, soils) & Agronomy (Soil Management) are discussed in Section 6 – Land, Soils and Geology;
- Landscape is discussed in Section 11 – Landscape;
- Cultural assets are discussed in Section 12 - Cultural Heritage; and
- Roads, as a component of Transport Infrastructure, are discussed in Section 14 – Roads & Traffic.



Table 13.1 EPA's Classification of Types of Material Assets

Asset Type	
Economic Assets - Natural Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assimilative capacity (air, water) - Non-renewable resources (minerals, soils) - Renewable resources
Economic Assets - Human Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cities, towns, villages and settlements - Transport infrastructure (roads) - Major utilities (water, sewage, power, telecommunications) - Ownership and access - Agronomy - Commercial & Industrial Development - Property - Tourism & Recreational Infrastructure
Cultural Assets – Physical Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Archaeology - Architecture - Settlements - Monuments, features and landmarks - Historic sites and structures - Landscape - Geological heritage
Cultural Assets – Social Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and dialects - Folklore and tradition - Religion and belief - Literary and artistic association

13.3.1 DESK STUDY

The study involved a virtual, but comprehensive, aerial examination of the study area and surrounding region using Google Maps, Google Earth Pro and available OSI maps to identify the material assets. All assets identified during this survey were interrogated, described and evaluated in terms of scale and significance prior to inclusion in the study.

The impact assessment, which determined the potential impacts of the proposed development on nearby material assets, was based on standard criteria issued by the EPA (2017) (Refer Appendix 3).

13.3.1.1 Sources of Information

The main sources of information are listed in section 13.7 References.

13.4 BASELINE DESCRIPTION OF RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

13.4.1 NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Westmeath County Council 2021), specifically Section 9.15, recognises that the county contains a variety of natural resources such as raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel, stone reserves including high purity limestones and shale used in cement and magnesia manufacture. The potential of these resources to underpin construction output and provide employment and economic growth in the local and regional economy is recognised as is the need to exploit such resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. The Council acknowledges that a satisfactory balance is required between the needs of the building industry and the need to protect the environment.

The suitability of any extractive enterprise shall be assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the local environment to such impacts, the scale of the development proposed and the capacity of the road network in the area to accommodate the associated traffic. It is the policy of the Council's to ensure that those extractions which would reduce the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to areas of scientific importance or of geological, botanical, zoological and other natural significance, including all designated European Sites, shall not be permitted.

The nature of the extractive industry is such that aggregate extraction can only take place where suitable aggregate resources occur—they are a 'tied' resource. This may give rise to land-use and environmental issues that must be considered in the planning process. Like many forms of development, extractive industries have the potential to cause harm, if not appropriately designed and managed. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that aggregates can be sourced without significantly damaging the landscape, environment, groundwater and aquifer sources, road network, heritage and/or residential amenities of the area.

All extraction will be subject to landscaping requirements and worked-out quarries will be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority, which could include recreational, amenity and end-of-life uses. There is potential for habitat creation through the restoration of quarry sites following the cessation of operations. The Council will have regard to the National Guidelines on Quarries and Ancillary Activities for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG 2004) when assessing applications relating to the extraction industry.

Westmeath has significant, albeit finite, resources in terms of aggregates, a resource that had come under pressure due to increased demand prior to the collapse of the construction industry in 2008. During the Section 261A process, it was determined from that there are 42 quarries in County Westmeath. Given the quantity of existing quarries in the county, the Council considers that there are already sufficient aggregate deposits available without requiring new or extended extraction pits in esker systems or any new quarries on greenfield lands. It is the policy of the Council to take cognisance of existing levels of extraction in considering new applications for development on greenfield sites and preference will be given to the sustainable continuation or extension of existing quarries.

Since aggregates can only be worked where they occur, it is important to identify the location of these resources with a view to safeguarding them. Planning policies need to be carefully



constructed to avoid adverse effects on aggregate resources and the related extractive industries and added value production that are essential for the built environment, infrastructure and future economic development.

It is a policy objective of the Council to:

CPO 9.62 Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:

- Areas of Geological interest as identified in the County Esker Survey
- Existing and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)
- Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna
- High Amenity Areas
- Zones of archaeological potential
- Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources
- The vicinity of a recorded monument
- Sensitive landscape areas
- Established rights of way and walking routes.

CPO 9.63 Facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region where there is a proven need for a certain mineral/aggregate and to exercise appropriate control (including ongoing consideration of environmental impacts) while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.

CPO 9.64 Facilitate the exploitation of the County's natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development, including rural housing, taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area.

CPO 9.65 Ensure that extractions (quarries / sand and gravel pits) which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to designated sites, habitat types or species shall not be permitted.

CPO 9.66 Ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.

CPO 9.67 Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.



CPO 9.68 Ensure that the extractive industry and associated development minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.

Refer to Appendix 1 for further details with respect to the Council's policies and objectives in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Westmeath County Council 2021).

There is a concentration of mineral resources in the Northern Hills and Lakes LCA in the northwest of the county. The area has a remote character and existing low-density development. The GSI's online mapping website shows that the mineral locations in the LCA consist of mostly disused, limestone quarries for aggregate and dimension stone production.

Aggregate products are generally of low unit value, with the most significant cost being transportation. Therefore, most quarries typically operate within a radius of c. 25 km of their market. The proposed development has the benefit of good access to the regional and national road network to meet future demands for aggregates in the area. It will ensure the continued viability of the aggregate supply in County Westmeath.

Numerous towns and villages lie within the natural market of Castlepollard Quarry (i.e., < 25 km), and include Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest, Collinstown c. 5 km to the southeast, Multyfarnham c. 8.5 km to the northwest, Delvin c. 13.5 km to the southeast, Oldcastle c. 13.5 km to the northeast, Mullingar c. 15.5 km to the southwest, Clonmellon c. 17 km to the east, Granard c. 17 km to the northwest, Edgeworthstown c. 20 km to the west, Killucan c. 21 km to the south, Kilnaleck c. 23 km to the north, Ballyjamesduff c. 23 km to the northeast, Virginia c. 24 km to the northeast, and Athboy c. 24 km to the southeast (See Figure 1.1). Thus, the quarry's market includes one county town (Mullingar), four urban towns (Edgeworthstown, Ballyjamesduff, Virginia, and Athboy), while Castlepollard, Collinstown, Multyfarnham, Delvin, Clonmellon, Killucan, Oldcastle, Granard, and Kilnaleck are identified by the CSO as census towns or villages due to populations of under 1,500.

The quarry at Castlepollard has an established history of quarrying using explosive techniques to break and extract the cherty limestone rock followed by crushing and screening to produce aggregate products. These activities have co-existed with other land uses in the area, including agriculture and silviculture, intermittently since before the early 1900s.

The quarry has provided employment for local people, both directly and indirectly. The quarry operation directly employs 2 people. In addition to this, there is indirect employment provided which includes local hauliers and contractors. It is anticipated that indirect employment, i.e., those people who rely directly upon the quarry and the associated business for their earnings amounts to a further 5 people.

The geological bedrock exposures within the existing quarry are considered of sufficient interest or importance to warrant designation or protection for earth science or geological heritage purposes. A search of the GSI Geological Heritage Database reveals that there are several sites of geological interest in the wider area (Refer to Table 6.4 and Figure 6.5), including the Castlepollard Quarry itself, which the GSI referred to as the Deerpark Quarry and which they designated a County Geological Site (CGS) (Meehan et al. 2019a, b). The site is designated under two IGH themes, primarily IGH8 (Lower Carboniferous) and secondarily IGH15 (Economic Geology) and may be recommended for Geological NHA. The

site was designated because “the rock is tough and hard compared to many of the ‘softer’ limestones elsewhere in the Midlands”. CGSs do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system, which should ensure that they are not inadvertently damaged or destroyed through lack of awareness.

There are seven such sites of geological interest near the application site (<7.5 km). There are no pathways by which the Castlepollard Quarry can impact the other sites, other than possibly by water, as discharge of waters to the tributary of the Yellow River will result in its flow into the Lough Derravaragh CGS. The sites of geoheritage interest are given in Table 6.4.

The relevant Geological Heritage Policy Objectives of Westmeath County Council set out in the County Development Plan 2021- 2027 are as follows:

- CPO 12.30** Contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 12.3.
- CPO 12.31** Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Geological Audit.
- CPO 12.32** Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland when undertaking, approving or authorising developments which are likely to impact on County Geological Sites or involve significant ground excavations.
- CPO 12.33** Protect geological NHA’s as they become designated during the lifetime of the Plan.
- CPO 12.34** Encourage and promote, where appropriate, public access to geological and geomorphological sites and avoid inappropriate development through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, subject to environmental and habitats assessment.

The Geological Heritage of County Westmeath (*An audit of County Geological Sites in County Westmeath 2019*) notes that working quarries (including Deerpark Quarry) are often listed because they represent the best available sections in areas with otherwise poor exposure, and that no restriction is sought on the legitimate operation of the quarries. However, maintenance of exposure after quarry closure is generally sought in agreement with the operator and planning authority in such a case.

The CGS Site report for Deerpark quarry notes that the “*geological heritage interest relies on continued working of the quarry as a place to see the strata that is exposes. Access to geologists is important but it is not suitable for promotion to the public as it is a company business and a hazardous working environment. Should the quarry cease to operate in the future, then some negotiated access to the site should be sought*” (Refer to Appendix 6.2).

Because the limestone itself is the feature of interest, and not any particular feature or location in the quarry), continued extraction will not destroy the feature of interest but rather increase exposure.

Details with respect to appropriate guidelines/mitigation measures with respect to Geological Heritage are provided in EIAR Section 6.6.2.

In response to a request for pre-application consultation (Refer Appendix 4), the GSI noted that *“as a working quarry, the listing as a County Geological Site has no implications for the normal operation of the quarry, subject to standard permissions and conditions under planning and environmental legislation. It would be desirable to consider retaining representative faces for geological purposes during aftercare and restoration plans instead of straight forward infill to original pre-quarrying topography.”*

The GSI have requested that the operator might assist our geological heritage goals with the following (and ideally this would be written into the restoration / closure plan) and be included as a condition of planning as deemed appropriate by the planning authority:

1. Allowing access to quarry faces by appropriate scientists (upon request and with due regards to Health and Safety requirements) during quarrying to record any new stratigraphies / relationships as they might become exposed and to establish if the quarry site is worthy of recognition post extraction and through aftercare/restoration planning.
2. If deemed appropriate in (1) above, leaving a representative section of the quarry face at the end of the quarry life or inclusion of information panels to promote the geology to the public or develop tourism or educational resources if appropriate depending on the future use of the site. Natural exposures are few, or deeply weathered; this measure would permit on-going improvement of geological knowledge of the subsurface.

The Geoheritage Programme tries to promote a partnership between geological heritage and active quarrying, with such measures as those outlined in the ‘Geological Heritage Guidelines for the Extractive Industry’.

To this end Lagan recently hosted GSI personnel on-site who were present filming for a television series called ‘The Island’ at the quarry - a three-part series which airs on RTE. One episode of the series produced in association with the GSI tells the story of Ireland from a geological perspective.

Mineral extraction by quarrying is defined as a heavy industry and requires the use of heavy plant and machinery, each of which are energy intensive. The crushing, screening and transport of rock and aggregates are typical examples of the use of machinery in quarry operations. Most plant used in the quarry is likely to run on diesel, especially as the continued use of mobile crushing and screening plant is proposed.

Quarries in Ireland produced c. 0.18 million tonnes of CO_{2eq} emissions in 2019, accounting for 0.3% of the national CO_{2eq} emissions budget. If we assume 500 active quarries (estimate by the GSI 2021), then the average quarry (e.g., Castlepollard Quarry) produces c. 360 tonnes CO_{2eq} emissions per annum.

13.4.2 SETTLEMENT

The site of the proposed development is located in rural central north Westmeath near the northern end of the Midlands limestone terrane. The quarry is located on the southwest side of, and with direct access onto, regional road R395, which connects the towns of Edegworthstown and Castlepollard to the northwest with the villages of Collinstown and Delvin

to the southeast. From the R395, the N52 (Dundalk-Kells-Mullingar-Tullamore-Nenagh National Secondary Road) can be accessed c. 13 km to the southeast at Delvin, while the N55 (Cavan-Granard-Edgeworthstown-Athlone National Secondary Road) can be accessed via Castlepollard c. 23 km to the northwest at Edgeworthstown.

The settlement pattern in the Deepark area can be described as low-intensity rural settlement, with some ribbon development and clusters of houses, albeit peripheral to the towns and settlements of Castlepollard, Delvin, Collinstown, Multyfarnham, Coole, etc. Indeed, Coole more closely resembles ribbon development than a coherent settlement. The nearest residential settlements close to the site is Castlepollard c. 2 km to the northwest, followed by the nearby villages of Collinstown c. 3 km to the southeast, Fore C. 5.5 km to the east, Coole c. 6.5 km to the northwest, Drumcree c. 8 km to the southeast, Multyfarnham c. 8.5 km to the west and Dromone c. 10 km to the northeast. Castlepollard represents the only major urban centre serving northern Westmeath.

Residential property in the area typically comprises one-off single residences along public roads or farmsteads at the end of lanes off the latter (Refer to Figures 1.2, 1.3 & 4.1). Each house fronts onto the road with its own separate entranceway, typical of ribbon development. While residential development consists of individual, one-off residences, there are distinct clusters of residences that do not qualify as villages, but might constitute hamlets, craigs or small settlements, such as Fore, Crookedwood and Coole.

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 and phasing of working with respect to receptors so as to reduce visual impact, while impacts due to noise and dust are substantially attenuated. With the exception of the R395 Regional Road and the N52 and N55 Secondary National Roads, the roads in the area (< 20 km) are of a local character and typical of a rural location.

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

13.4.3 LAND USE

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 (Refer to Figure 1.2 & 1.3).

The site is situated adjacent to, and with direct access onto, the R395, via a short right of way access road (c. 130 m) and site entrance and gateway. The R395 connects Edgeworthstown and Castlepollard to the northwest with Collinstown and Delvin to the southeast.

The site occurs at an elevation of 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 cherty limestone with enclosed lakes and areas of peat deposits. The site is situated near the northern end 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 site is situated in a predominantly rural area of central north County Westmeath. The surrounding landscape is characterised by a rolling landform typical of the hills of the Northern Hills & Lakes Landscape Character Area. The hills are developed on, and are topped by, more weather resistant cherty limestone, and hence are topographically prominent in relation to the typical Lower Carboniferous limestones that underlie most of the central plain of the Irish Midlands. Thus, the site is situated in rolling, hilly land, but more specifically within a narrow shallow valley, along whose NW-SE oriented axis the R395 follows.

The Corine (CORINE: Co-ORdinated INformation on the Environment) land-use map (2018) shows that the predominant land use within the application site is given as land principally occupied by agriculture (243), although by definition it is mineral extraction related to the quarrying of limestone and associated activities (Refer to Figure 11.8). Prior to the commencement of quarrying, the lands had been kept in agriculture use, with a small quarry used intermittently. Land-use in the wider area consists of a patchwork of agricultural fields, which are predominantly held in pasture (231), but also with significant swathes of land principally occupied by agriculture (243), non-irrigated arable land (211), coniferous forests (312), mixed forest (313), transitional woodland shrub (324), and peat bogs (412). There are relatively high levels of forest cover in the area, mostly due to mono-type afforestation comprising scattered, rectilinear patches of coniferous forest. There is also forest cover associated with some minor river corridors and common mature, overgrown hedgerows, while

there is a conspicuous absence of planned landscapes or parkland, except at Tullynally Castle and Coolure Demesne, Castlepollard and Clonyn Castle, Delvin.

Field dimensions vary widely from small to large, while hedgerows vary from over-grown to less commonly well-managed. The predominance of larger field sizes and variably mature hedgerows tends to create a relatively open rural landscape, with some enclosed road corridors with restricted views. The area is generally characterised by rolling topography and vigorous hedges with many hedgerow trees, which provide near and some middle distance views, but typically few long distance views.

The application site has a c. 10 m of frontage onto regional road R395, which is serviced by an existing secured, industrial-style gateway with a tarmac apron and internal access road. The internal access road extends from the northeastern corner of the main section of the site c. 130 m to the R395 regional road. The main entranceway occurs c. 100 m southeast of the intersection of local road L5743 with the R395. 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 general configuration of the site is that the quarry was excavated into the northern flank of a NW-SE oriented cherty limestone hill/ridge. To date, extraction has taken place in the northern and central sections of the site, which have been stripped of overburden and had the rock extracted down to a level of c. 88 m. The existing quarry comprises disturbed ground in a large, level former 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 hill.

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. 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.

The overburden has been stripped from the southern section of the area permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525, and it is proposed to extend extraction in this area and to depth. A perimeter earthen berm has been constructed and seeded on the boundaries of the extraction area at the southern end of the site.

The current operators, Lagan Materials Ltd. acquired the leasehold interest in the quarry in 2017. The quarry is permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525, PL 25.128072. The asphalt plant, previously granted planning permission under P.A. Ref. 01/525, has been removed and will not be reinstalled as part of this proposed development.

The annual extraction rate for the quarry is approximately 100,000 tonnes per annum. The quarry is currently being worked dry with infiltration of rainfall to ground on the quarry floor.

The floor of the existing quarry is at c. 88 m AOD. It is proposed to develop an additional bench below the current quarry floor to c. 70 m AOD. In order to maintain a dry working environment on the floor of the quarry, some rainfall-runoff and groundwater will need to be discharged from site. The development will include upgrading of the Water Management



System. Development of the quarry at depth below current floor will require dewatering and discharge to surface water. 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 northern section of the site is currently being used for aggregate storage, and other ancillaries, while the crushing and screening is carried out using mobile plant within the extraction area. There are no proposals to extend the site beyond the quarry area of c. 11.4 ha permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525. Thus, there will be no additional land take, and it is considered that the development will result in only a minor change in land cover. As the southern extension of the extraction area has already been stripped of overburden, there will be no significant impact on agriculture.

The site has had a long, if intermittent, history of quarrying, such that these activities have co-existed with other, predominantly agricultural, land uses in the area. The proposed land use on-site will continue the tradition of quarrying activities and associated operations.

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 operate a quarry at Gaulmoylestown, Knockdrin, c. 8 km to the south. There are also large sand and gravel pit workings operated by J.J. Flood and B.D. Flood (Murrens Quarry) c. 7.5 km to the northeast near Drumone, Oldcastle.

Quarry workings have been a feature of this site since the 1900's. On completion of site activities, the quarry will be decommissioned and reinstated in accordance with the approved quarry restoration scheme, and thus integrated back into the surrounding landscape. It is envisaged that the quarry site will undergo a change of land use from mineral extraction to a beneficial after-use, most probably as a wildlife amenity.

13.4.4 TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The application site is located c. 2 km southeast of Castlepollard on regional road R395, which is known as Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath or Dublin Road, according to Google Maps. The quarry is located on the southwest side of, and with direct access onto, regional road R395, which connects the towns of Edgeworthstown and Castlepollard to the west with the villages of Collinstown and Delvin to the southeast. The N52 National Secondary Road can be accessed at Delvin, which is c. 13.5 km southeast of the site, while the N55 National Secondary Road can be accessed near Edgeworthstown, c. 20.5 km to the west, thus connecting the site to the principal transport arteries in northern County Westmeath (Refer to Figure 1.1).

The road network in the wider area can be described as a box with the two National Secondary Roads running with a roughly NNE-SSW orientation; the N52 to the east at Delvin and the N55 to the west at Edgeworthstown, while the two Primary National Roads also run with a roughly NW-SE orientation; the N4 by-passing just north of Mullingar to the south and the N3 by-passing just west of Kells to the north. The two National Primary Roads represent the arterial road corridors of the M4/N4 (Dublin-Maynooth-Mullingar-Longford-Carrick-on-Shannon-Sligo National Route) and the M3/N3 (Dublin-Navan-Kells-Cavan National Route).



The two National Secondary Routes are the N52 (Dundalk-Kells-Mullingar-Tullamore-Nenagh National Route) and the N55 (Cavan-Granard-Edgeworthstown-Athlone National Route).

Castlepollard is situated centrally within this box and from which the R195, R394 and R395 emanate in a radial pattern. The R395 regional road has an overall WNW-ESE orientation and represents a transverse route across the northern half of County Westmeath connecting Edgeworthstown via Castlepollard to Delvin. The R394 runs roughly NNW-SSE connecting Finnea and the N55 in the northwest via Castlepollard with Crookedwood, Monilea, Mullingar and the N4 in the southwest. The R195 connects Castlepollard with Oldcastle, Virginia and the N3 in the northeast.

Thus, the roads of the wider area form a box-like network of regional and national roads connecting all the urban centres in the region. 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. 21 km west to Edgeworthstown, c. 21 km south to Killucan, c. 23 km north to Kilnaleck, c. 23 km northeast to Ballyjamesduff, c. 24 km northeast to Virginia, and c. 24 km southeast to Athboy, Castlepollard Quarry falls within the natural catchment of these settlements.

Of the larger 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. It is expected that most of the site traffic serving the quarry will likely be: (1) off the R394 at Castlepollard from Mullingar; (2) off the R395 from Edgeworthstown, Granard, Delvin and Castlepollard; (3) off the R195 at Castlepollard from Oldcastle and Virginia; (4) off the N52 at Delvin from Mullingar and Kells; or (5) off the N51 at Delvin from Athboy.

With the exception of the above five national routes, the roads in the wider area are of a regional or local character and typical of a rural location. The remaining towns and villages lie on the 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 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS) envisaged that Mullingar-Tullamore and Athlone could act as the only Gateway within the Midlands Region, but this has since been revoked. The new settlement hierarchy for the region designates Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre, Mullingar as a Key Town and Castlepollard as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town (Refer to Appendix 1). Key Towns are 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. Self-Sustaining Growth Towns are those with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining. It is clear from the above that many of the towns and urban centres, such as Mullingar, Edgeworthstown, Virginia and Kells, are located on a national transport corridor and within 25 km of the site (Refer Figure 1.1). These urban centres are located on major transport corridors and are the focus of strong growth and investment under the National Development Plan, in order to achieve sustainable development.

The significant roads in the region are summarised below:

- N3/M3 is the National Primary Route connecting the capital city, Dublin to Dunshaughlin, Navan, Kells, Virginia, Cavan Town and Belturbet. The road is a tolled motorway between the M50 in Dublin and Kells, where it becomes dual carriageway as far White Gates, where it then becomes a single carriageway. It is one of the strategic radial corridors identified in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) (DoEHLG 2002) and strategic transport corridors identified in the Eastern & Midland RSES (EMRA 2019).
- N4/M4 is the National Primary Road connecting Dublin to Maynooth, Mullingar, Edgeworthstown, Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon and Sligo Town. The road is a motorway from Lucan to Coralstown, just west of Kinnegad, after which it becomes dual carriageway, until Mullingar, after which it becomes a single carriageway. It is also one of the strategic radial transport corridors identified in the NSS and RSES.
- N52 is a National Secondary Road connecting the N1/M1 c. 3 km north of Dundalk with the M7 c. 2 km south of Nenagh. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 177 km. It is not one of the strategic radial transport corridors, but is nonetheless a major route connecting numerous large towns in the Midlands.
- N55 Regional Road is a National Secondary Road connecting the N6 as it by-passes the outskirts of Athlone with the N3 as it by-passes Cavan Town, via Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Granard and Ballinagh. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 79 km. It is not one of the strategic radial transport corridors, but is nonetheless a significant route connecting several large towns in the Midlands, not to mention the N6, N4 and N3 strategic transport corridors.
- R395 is a Regional Road connecting Delvin in the east with Edgeworthstown in the west, via Drumcree, Collinstown, Castlepollard and Coole. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 40 km. It is not one of the strategic radial transport corridors, but is nonetheless a significant route connecting the N52 with the N55. The R395 could be viewed as the logical extension of the N51, which terminates in Delvin and connects with Drogheda via Athboy, Navan and Slane. It is also significant in the context of the proposal as at least the initial c. 2 km stage of the main haulage route for the quarry to Castlepollard and c. 14 km to Delvin..

The road is a c. 6m 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. 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.

- R394 Regional Road is oriented roughly NW-SE, and connects Mullingar with the N55 at Kilcogy via Monilea, Crookedwood, Castlepollard and Finnea. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 41 km, and importantly is expected to serve as the main haulage route for the quarry between Castlepollard and Mullingar. The road is a c. 6.5



m wide, hot-rolled asphalt-surfaced, single carriageway roadway with no hard shoulders and grass verges typically of < 1.0 m in width.

- R195 Regional Road is oriented roughly NNW-SSE, and connects Castlepollard with the R194 and the N3 at Virginia via Oldcastle. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 26 km.
- L5743 is a local road running roughly NE-SW that connects the R395 c. 100 m northwest of the site to the R195 north of Lough Lene. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 3.25 km and is typically lined with dense, mature hedgerows containing trees that create an enclosed roadway.
- L5741 is a local road oriented roughly WNW-ESE, and connects Castlepollard with the R395 west of Collinstown along a more northerly subparallel route. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 4.0 km. The road is typically an elevated roadway following the ridge line that separates the catchments of Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh. It is only partially enclosed providing middle and long distance views, particularly of the quarry to the south and Lough Lene to the north.
- L5739 is a local road, which is known as the Old Glenview Road near Castlepollard and the Bratty Road further south. The road is oriented roughly NNW-SSE, and connects Castlepollard with the L1731 at Ballyknock. The road is a single carriageway that extends c. 6.25 km, and runs c. 250 m west of the site.

The local roads in the Deerpark area are typical of a rural location, and consist of single surface dressed carriageways, generally connecting to other local roads or forming Cul De Sac's that penetrate as far as to service several houses or farmsteads.

There has been a long association with quarrying and quarry related traffic accessing the R395 at this location. The R395 has been the established haulage route for the shipment of the quarry products since 2001. 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 site is serviced by an existing secured, industrial-style gateway with a tarmac apron and access road. The gate is set back 30 m to allow trucks awaiting entry to queue without obstructing traffic on the R395. 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 entrance is the only site frontage onto the R395.

The junction is located within an 80 km/hr speed limit area. Hedge lines and verges will be regularly maintained by the developer in order to maintain sufficient visibility at the site entrance.

The proposed application is in relation to continuation of the current operations at Lagan's existing Castlepollard Quarry. An average extraction capacity of 100,000 tonnes per annum is anticipated as part of the proposed development.

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.

The historical collision data indicates that there was one Serious Injury collision recorded between 2005 and 2016, approx. 110 m north of the quarry access (see Figure 14.6). It was a head-on collision involving a car and occurred in 2016, resulting in four casualties. It 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. Further details with respect to the road network and the impact and mitigation of traffic are contained within this report (Refer to EIAR Section 14).

Westmeath is serviced by Iarnród Éireann's Dublin to Galway and Sligo mainline railway services. The mainline from Dublin crosses the southeast of the corner of the county to Mullingar. The line splits into the Galway line which traverses west across the south of the county to Athlone and ultimately Galway, as well as Westport and Ballina, and the Sligo mainline which traverses northwest across the county to Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon, Boyle and Sligo Town.

Dublin Airport is the nearest airport at c. 73 km due southeast of the site, whilst Drogheda Port is the nearest port at c. 62.5 km.

The River Shannon, which forms the county border in the southwest of the county, and the Royal Canal, which traverses the centre of the county from roughly c. 2 km south of Killucan to c. 1 km north of Ballymahon, offer kilometres of navigable waterways.

13.4.5 BUILT SERVICES

13.4.5.1 Electricity Network

Power to local residences is provided by overhead lines, which form part of ESB's country-wide, medium and low voltage, electricity distribution network. A 3-phase 38 kV power line is located within the northwest boundary of the site. An overhead telephone line serving the property crosses the R395 just north of the site entrance connects with the site office (Refer to Figure 1.3).

The transmission grid is very sparse in the north Midlands, and there are no transmission lines in Westmeath north of Mullingar. A 100kV line from Lanesboro to Mullingar to Finglas passes c. 18 km south of the site while another 100 kV line from Navan to Arva passes c. 15 km north of the site (Refer Figure 13.1).

EirGrid has rolled out GRID25, which sets out the development of the transmission infrastructure to ensure that grid reinforcements enable connection of significant amounts of renewable energy generation. There are no plans to reinforce the transmission grid in the wider area of Deerpark.

13.4.5.2 Gas Network

Indigenous natural gas is supplied from the Kinsale Head Gas Pipeline, which comes ashore at the Inch Terminal near Whitegate, County Cork, and the Corrib Gas Pipeline, which comes ashore at Bellanaboy Terminal, County Mayo. Bord Gais also have two subsea gas pipeline interconnectors with Scotland that come ashore near Gormanstown, County Meath and Loughshinny, County Dublin. These pipelines connect into the network, which in the east of Ireland consists of a main line running from Cork to Dublin and up the east coast to N. Ireland, with multiple spurs to supply towns on route, such as one to Virginia and Kells and another to Trim and Navan. The transmission pipeline network does not cross the northern Midlands, although a major transverse transmission line crosses from the Galway area to Loughshinny, and has numerous spurs including one to Mullingar. Thus, the gas pipelines do not pass within c. 15 km of Deerpark (Refer Figure 13.2). However, Labour TD for Westmeath, Willie Penrose TD, in October 2017 stated, "I hope as soon as this review is completed that towns such as Kinnegad, Kilbeggan, Moate, Castlepollard and Delvin can be considered for connection to the national gas grid".

13.4.5.3 Water Supply Infrastructure

There are no Public or Group Water Schemes (PWS) Source Protection Areas within 15 km of the site, the nearest being the Ballymachugh PWS, which lies c. 18 km northwest of the site.

Most residential properties in the local area are serviced by mains water supply and to a lesser extent by private bored wells. Most houses are serviced by septic tank systems and proprietary effluent treatment systems. The water supply for the quarry is provided by a roadside mains water supply. Additionally, office water dispensers from bottled water suppliers are usually supplied at offices of the company.

As the proposed development includes extraction at depths down to 70 m AOD, groundwater infiltrating into the lower bench will require dewatering. The excess water in the system will require discharge off-site. 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.

With respect to dust suppression and any spray waters in the conveyor belts of the crushers/screening units, the onsite PW3 and/or the site's stormwater sump shall provide the waters that do not need to be of potable water quality.

13.4.5.4 Telecommunications Network

An overhead telephone line serving the property crosses the R395 just north of the site entrance and connects with the site office (Refer to Figure 1.3).

There are several mobile masts or base stations for the transmission and reception of mobile telecommunication in the region around Deerpark. These masts house both point to point microwave links and cellular technologies used in the provision of telecommunication services. The nearest cell mast to the Deerpark site is located c. 650 m southeast of the site at the southern boundary of the townland of Deerpark. The next nearest cell mast is located north



of Bishop's Lough in the townland of Derrynagarragh, c. 2.5 km south of site, while there are three masts located in the northern outskirts of Castlepollard.

In 2016, a total of 69.6% of residences in the Kinturk ED had internet access—61.2% by broadband.

13.4.5.5 Sewerage System

The wastewater from the welfare facility is sent to the septic tank and percolation area of an adjacent, unoccupied house in the ownership of the applicant. The house is located immediately north of the site. The septic tank and discharge area of the house previously served a family and is therefore deemed to be appropriately sized for the site. EPA (1999) assigns a 40 l/p/d hydraulic loading to staff for quarries with no canteen loading, and this means that the 3 workers at the site are equivalent to one person as per the 150 l/p/d specified by EPA (2021).

13.4.6 WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Although the waste produced by the development will be minimal, waste bins are suitably positioned on site for the purpose of general waste management. A suitably licensed waste collection contractor removes any office, canteen or other general waste requiring recovery/disposal to a licensed waste management facility.

13.4.7 CULTURAL ASSETS

The proposed development was the subject of an assessment that involved the investigation of cultural heritage including the archaeological, structural and historical background of the application area and the surrounding area using a wide range of existing information, as well as a field assessment (Refer to EIA Section 12).

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 EIA 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.

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.

13.4.8 LANDSCAPES & NATURAL HERITAGE

Westmeath is a landlocked, inland county in the north midlands and occupies a strategic position near the centre of the country. The county 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 prominent feature. There are also significant cutaway peatlands and also prominent esker systems in southwestern Westmeath. Westmeath is known as the Lakeland County, but its landscape includes a diversity of landscape types, ranging from rolling hills and lakes to wetlands, peatlands, grasslands, woodlands and eskers. 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.

Inland waterways consisting of the River Shannon (forming the Westmeath-Roscommon) and the Royal Canal traversing east-west across the centre of the county from Killucan to Mullingar to Ballymahon, provide important visual and recreational amenities within the landscape. A spur of the Grand Canal runs north from near Ballinagar, Co. Offaly to Killbeggan, but was closed in 1961 and is no longer navigable. 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.

The site 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 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 site lies outside of the Lough Lene Area of High Amenity and is not within the Fore Special Heritage Area. The topography of the wider area is that of rolling hilly landscape with the site situated in a NW-SE-oriented, narrow, shallow valley, where elevations typically vary from 80 to 225 m AOD.

The site occurs at a maximum natural elevation of 228 m AOD along the southern boundary and a minimum natural elevation of 88 m AOD along the northern boundary and at the R395 Regional Road (i.e., northeastern corner of site). As the quarry was developed on the northern flank of a hill, the general topographical trend of the undisturbed land within site is lower to the south. The surrounding lands are largely agricultural, but with copses of trees flanking the hill and significant afforestation further west. The landscape of the Deerpark site itself is defined by mainly disturbed ground resulting from the operation of quarrying in the area of the ridge or hill, which is covered by copses of trees on its eastern and western flanks.

The topography in the area of the site is hilly, with the general regional landform descending to the southwest towards the central plain, and comprising the Shannon River Basin, which covers almost the entire county. This wider regional landscape is a relatively uninterrupted, flat to undulating broad lowland plain, with the nearest higher ground at Slieve Na Calliagh (elev. 329 m AOD) c. 13 km northeast near Oldcastle, the Hill of Mael (elev. 295 m AOD) c. 8 km northwest near Mullaghmeen, and the Hill of Uisneach (elev. 236 m AOD) c. 26.5 km southwest near Ballymore. The Slieve Bloom Mountains lie c. 60 km to the south and c. 75 km to both the Cooley Mountains and Wicklow Mountains, in an otherwise vast tract of flat lowland plain that covers much of the midlands. Thus, the surrounding area comprises relatively flat low-lying land at or below the elevation of the site, which is studded sporadically with prominent hills, but without mountains for at least 60 kms in all directions.

The landscape is characterised by mature hedgerows with many hedgerow trees, whilst the land is predominantly in pasture, used mostly for stock rearing, and some mixed tillage. Significant areas of coniferous forestry and some successional woodland also occur in this landscape area. The rolling topography and mature hedgerows with many trees tend to create enclosed rural road corridors with views generally restricted to short and middle distances.

The site is bounded by farmland and copses of trees, with a 10m wide frontage to the R395 via a 130 m internal access road to the northeast corner of the site. Because the quarry has been developed by excavating into the northern flank of the hill, the latter screens views of the workings in an arc from the northwest anti-clockwise to the east. Presently, there are only intermittent views of the workings along the R395 north east of the entranceway with most views of the current quarry workings screened by the copse of trees on the flank of the hill into which the quarry has been excavated. There are limited, middle-distance views further north along the R395, which generally amount to views of the upper quarry face, against the copse of trees

defining the rim of the quarry void. However, there will be no significant additional visual intrusion with continuation of quarry operations as the back quarry face progresses southwards. There are also middle-distance intermittent views from rural road L5741. These intermittent views generally amount to views of the upper quarry face.

The proposed development is situated within the Northern Hills and Lakes Landscape Character Area (i.e., LCA1). The landscape sensitivity of the LCA is not explicitly stated, but given the presence of the Lough Lene Area of High Amenity and the Fore Special Heritage Area, it probably corresponds to medium to high, and can thus accommodate limited development pressure, but with limitations in terms of scale and magnitude.

The LCA has a limited capacity to absorb development arising from its partially enclosed landscape with minimal long distance views. The landscape can physically or visually absorb some development, mitigating the visual impact on the landscape, which can otherwise have a disproportionate visual impact. Thus, this rural landscape has a limited capacity to physically or visually absorb development, while the adjoining areas of high amenity would be of higher sensitivity. However, there are no designated scenic views sufficiently near the site (< 5 km) to experience any adverse visual impact due to the development.

The settlement pattern in the wider Deerpark area can be described as low intensity rural settlement, with several towns and villages and some ribbon development on the approach roads to the settlements, particularly Castlepollard. Residential property in the rural area typically comprises single or clusters of one-off residences along public roads, as well as farmsteads along public roads or at the end of lanes off the latter. Many of the one-off residences are relatively new and lack the screening of mature hedgerows and vegetation, whereas the farmsteads tend to be relatively well screened by hedgerows.

The locality is of a rural, pastoral character, and is not open to views from any of the designated views in the county (Refer EIAR Figure 11.5). However, the nearby Lough Lene and Lough Derravaragh are designated High Amenity Areas, while the Fore Special Heritage Area runs along the R395 to the north east of the site. Lake Derravaragh is also located on the identified Táin Trail (tourist driving/cycling route) and along the proposed northern sector of the Westmeath Way (walking route). Leisure activities associated with the lake include fishing, canoeing and water sports, while there are more passive recreational areas that act as more reclusive retreats for writers, artists and walkers.

The site occurs within a narrow valley, such that the development is not open to views from nearby designated views nor High Amenity Areas. Although the Fore Special Heritage Area runs along the R395 to the northeast of the site, the monastic settlement lies c. 4 km to the northeast on the opposite side of Lough Lene, which itself is also not visible from the site. Thus, the development will not have any significant visual impact on the designated views, High Amenity Areas or Special Heritage Areas in the county (Refer to Figures 11-4 and 11-5). The visual impact of the proposed development is discussed in more detail in Section 11 - Landscape.

The application site is not included in any area with an ecological designation (SAC, SPA, NHA or pNHA). There are fifteen Natura 2000 sites located within 15 km of the site (Refer to Figure 11-6), the nearest being Lough Lene SAC (Site Code 002121); followed by River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC (Site Code 002299); White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo SAC (Site Code 001810); Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC (Site Code 002120); Scragh



Bog SAC (Site Code 000692); Lough Derravaragh SPA (Site Code 004043); Lough Owel SCA (Site Code 000688) and SPA (Site Code 004047); Garriskil Bog SAC (Site Code 000679) and SPA (Site Code 004102); Lough Iron SPA (Site Code 004046); Lough Sheelin SAC (Site Code 002340) and SPA (Site Code 004065); Derragh Bog SAC (Site Code 002201); and Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA (004061).

Most of these Natura 2000 sites are too distant (> 5 km) from the site and/or occur either upstream of in different subcatchments, such that there is no reasonable pathway by which the quarry at Deerpark could impact their habitats or species.

The nearest European sites to the Proposed Development are associated with Lough Lene and include the Lough Lene SAC (Site Code 002121), which is located just over 1.18 km to the east. However, this site is located in a different hydrological catchment.

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. 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.

Appropriate assessment was introduced by the EU Habitats Directive as a way of determining if a planned project is likely to have a significant effect on one of the Natura 2000 sites so far designated (i.e., the candidate SAC's and SPA's), or their conservation objectives.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was carried out with respect to the potential impact of the Proposed Development on designated European sites, including Lough Derravaragh (Refer to Appendix 8 & 9, respectively).

This NIS has reviewed the predicted impacts arising from the proposed development and found that with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, specifically with regard to surface water, significant effects on the integrity of the Lough Derravaragh SPA can be ruled out.

The proposed development will require a Water Management Plan to avoid potential impacts on the receiving environment of the Yellow River and Lough Derravaragh downstream.

It is the conclusion of this NIS, on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available, and subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures set out under Section 9.3.6 of the NIS, that the possibility of any adverse effects on the integrity of the European Sites considered in this NIS, or on the integrity of any other European Site (having regard to their conservation objectives), arising from the Proposed Development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, can be excluded beyond a reasonable scientific doubt.

There are a multitude of designated natural heritage sites (NHA and pNHA) within 15 km of the Deerpark site. The nearest NHA is Lough Derravaragh NHA (Site Code 000684) c. 4 km to the west; followed by Lough Garr NHA (Site Code 001812); Wooddown Bog NHA (Site



Code 000694); and Lough Kinale And Derragh Lough NHA (Site Code 000985). The nearest pNHA is the Lough Glore pNHA (Site Code 000686) c. 3 km to the northeast, followed by Aghalasty Fen pNHA (Site Code 000672) c. 3.75 km to the east. Other pNHA's within 15 km of the site are: White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo pNHA (Site Code 001810); Lough Naneagh pNHA (Site Code 001814); Hill Of Mael And The Rock Of Curry pNHA (Site Code 000681); Lough Bane pNHA (Site Code 001721); Ballynafid Lake And Fen pNHA (site Code 000673); Scragh Bog pNHA (Site Code 000692); Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin's Lough Complex pNHA (Site Code 000690); Lough Owel pNHA (Site Code 000688); Garriskil Bog pNHA (Site Code 000679); Lough Iron pNHA (Site Code 000687); Lough Sheelin pNHA (Site Code 000987); and Lough Shesk pNHA (Site Code 000556).

As noted above, the nearest NHA site is Lough Derravaragh NHA at c. 4 km, while the nearest pNHA site is Lough Glore at c. 3 km. Given the size and scale of the proposed development, the nature of the materials, and the large standoff distances, no direct or indirect impact is expected on these or any NHA or pNHA as a result of the continuance of quarry operations at Deerpark.

There will be no significant change to the quarry habitats from the continued working of the quarry. The quarry base and surrounding upper levels comprise areas of bedrock and have been prepared for quarrying with no predicted significant effects on footprint habitats. The predicted direct effect on footprint habitats is neutral, imperceptible and permanent.

The surrounding Woodland/Scrub mosaic will continue to be managed as part of the quarry operation with similar levels of maintenance of tracks and access areas. The predicted direct effect on surrounding habitats is neutral, imperceptible and long term.

A search of the GSI Geological Heritage Database reveals that there are several sites of geological interest in the wider area (Refer Table 6.4 and Figure 6.5), including the Castlepollard Quarry itself, which the GSI referred to as the Deerpark Quarry and which they designated a County Geological Site (CGS) (Meehan et al. 2019a, b).

The CGS Site report for Deerpark quarry notes that the *“geological heritage interest relies on continued working of the quarry as a place to see the strata that is exposes. Access to geologists is important but it is not suitable for promotion to the public as it is a company business and a hazardous working environment. Should the quarry cease to operate in the future, then some negotiated access to the site should be sought”* (Refer to Appendix 6.2).

Because the limestone itself is the feature of interest, and not any particular feature or location in the quarry), continued extraction will not destroy the feature of interest but rather increase exposure. Details with respect to appropriate guidelines/mitigation measures with respect to Geological Heritage are provided in EIAR Section 6.6.2.

Should any significant bedrock exposures of importance be identified, Lagan will work with the GSI to find a mutually beneficial arrangement on how best they can be designed to remain visible as rock exposure rather than covered with soil and vegetated, in accordance with safety guidelines and engineering constraints. This measure would permit on-going improvement of geological knowledge of the subsurface and could be included as additional sites of the geoheritage dataset, if appropriate.

On completion of quarrying, the site will be reinstated in accordance with the proposed quarry restoration scheme. Therefore, in the long term, the site will be assimilated back into the



landscape in a planned manner, with the attendant improvement to the visual amenity of the area.

13.4.9 SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

The site is located in a sparsely populated rural area of northern County Westmeath. 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 graigs in the area, with 42 residences within a 1 km radius of the quarry site (See EIAR Figure 4.1).

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, 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.

Lough Derravaragh SAC and NHA lie c. 4 km to the southwest, and given the proposal to discharge waters off-site into a drainage ditch and tributary of the Yellow River, which drains into Lough Derravaragh, the latter is considered a sensitive receptor.



13.5 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

The following Impact Assessment Matrix provides an indication of the significance of potential effects arising during the life cycle of the development not accounting for any mitigation measures (Table 13.2).

As stated above, the impact assessment, which determined the potential impacts of the proposed development on the material assets in the area, was based on standard criteria issued by the EPA (Refer Appendix 3, Section 3.1.2).

The proposed development 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 material progress of human society and their built environment.

The location of Deerpark with ready access to the N4, N52 and N55 in northern Westmeath and within 25 km of numerous towns and one county town (i.e., Mullingar), renders the proposed quarry development well positioned to serve this vibrant construction market. The location of the quarry with ready access to Mullingar, the second fastest growing county in the country, should alone ensure access to a strong, growing market for good quality aggregate.

Table 13.2 Material Assets - Impact Matrix

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

None/imperceptible: X; Slight: ●; Moderate: ●; Significant/Very significant: ●.
 Refer to Appendix 3 for definition of Significance

The impact on material assets resulting from the proposed development is assessed here, and possible mitigation measures proposed to reduce any significant impacts. It is expected that the potential negative impacts on material assets of the area arising from the quarry will relate primarily to nuisance from noise, dust and traffic. Indirect or cumulative impacts associated with other similar developments within the area are dealt with where necessary under the respective topic in the EIAR.

Table 13.3 Material Assets – Potential Impacts & Mitigation

Ref.	Material Asset	Relevant EIAR Section
13.4.1	Non-Renewable Resources	3.4.1, 6
13.4.2	Settlement - Residential Development	3.2.1, 4, 9, 10, 11
13.4.3	Land Use	3.2.1, 4, 5, 6, 11
13.4.4	Transport Infrastructure	3.3.3.16, 4, 14
13.4.5	Built Services	3.3.4
13.4.6	Waste Management Infrastructure	None
13.4.7	Cultural Assets	12
13.4.8	Landscape & Natural Heritage	3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11
13.4.9	Sensitive Receptors	3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14

The potential impacts associated with the quarry and any proposed mitigation measures in relation to the material assets described above are covered under relevant sections of the EIAR in Table 13.3.

13.5.1 '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. The existing site permitted under P.A. Ref. 01/525 comprises a relatively small scale (i.e., c. 11.4 ha), quarry, which is being worked with mobile crushing & screening plant. 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).

As the quarry area is currently active, the absence of the proposed development would have significant impact on the material assets within the site, resulting in an identified and workable aggregate resource being left unworked.

13.5.2 DIRECT IMPACTS

Potential impacts on the material assets of the area can arise out of the construction and decommissioning stages, but particularly the operational stage of the quarry development (Refer to Table 13.4).

The quarry will enable the production of quality aggregates for the wider Westmeath and surrounding region and thus help sustain economic development in the region. It is expected that the potential negative impacts on material assets of the area arising from the quarry, will relate primarily to nuisance from noise, dust and traffic.

As the application relates to an existing quarry with much of its infrastructure in-situ, only a brief construction phase is envisaged.

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.

The pavement of the roads in the vicinity of the existing quarry and the R395 is in good condition and will be reviewed with the Roads Section of Westmeath County Council at an agreed frequency.

Although the waste produced by the development will be minimal, waste bins are suitably positioned on site for the purpose of general waste management. A suitably licensed waste collection contractor removes any office, canteen or other general waste requiring recovery/disposal to a licensed waste management facility.

The potential impacts associated with the proposed development and any proposed mitigation measures in relation to the material assets described above are covered under relevant sections of the EIAR (Refer to Table 13.3 above). Human health risks will be managed by preventing public access to the site and having appropriate health and safety measures in place for staff working on the site.

On completion of site activities, the site of the quarry will be decommissioned, all infrastructure and plant will be removed, and the site 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 Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

It is considered that following restoration and the mitigation measures incorporated in the design that there will be no significant adverse effects in terms of material assets. The restoration of the site to beneficial after-use, most probably as a wildlife amenity, will result in a permanent significant positive effect in the long-term.



Table 13.4 Direct Impacts by Stage of Development

Direct Impact	Construction Stage	Operational Stage	Decommissioning Stage
Non-Renewable Resources	None	Moderate, permanent, negative impact due to removal of natural resources due to extraction.	None
Settlement - Residential Development	Slight, short-term, negative due to minor noise and dust.	Slight long term, negative due to minor noise and dust.	Slight, long-term, positive due to restoration and improved local amenity.
Land Use	None	Slight to moderate, long term, negative due to continued development of quarry to south.	Moderate, long-term, positive due to restoration of site to wildlife amenity.
Transport Infrastructure	Slight, short term, negative due to increased traffic by contractors.	Not significant, long term, negative due to quarry HGV traffic	Slight, short-term, negative due to removal of plant and infrastructure off-site.
Built Services	None	None	None
Waste Management Infrastructure	None	None	None
Cultural Assets	None	None	Slight, long-term, positive due to improved context of RMPs.
Landscape & Natural Heritage	Slight, short-term, negative due to landscaping works to south.	Slight to moderate, medium to long term, negative due to continued development of quarry to south	Moderate, long-term, positive due to restoration to wildlife amenity.
Sensitive Receptors	Slight, short-term, negative due to minor noise and dust.	Slight to Moderate, long term, negative due to noise, dust and visual impact on residential amenity.	Moderate, long-term, positive due to improved local amenity and context of RMPs.

13.5.3 INDIRECT IMPACTS

Indirect impacts are dealt with where necessary under the respective topic in the EIAR.

13.5.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts associated with other developments within the wider area are dealt with where necessary under the respective topic in the EIAR.

There are no other 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 on the material assets of the area.

13.5.5 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 material assets.

13.5.6 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

As a result of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated in the design, there will be no significant, adverse residual impacts on the material assets of the area during the operational phase, other than the loss of mineral resources due to extraction.

It is considered that following full restoration and closure of the site that there will also be no significant, long-term, adverse impacts in terms of the material assets. The restored quarry will provide a more manageable and sustainable, long-term environment than is currently the case, with a change in land-use to a beneficial after-use as a wildlife amenity.

13.5.7 'WORST CASE' IMPACTS

A possible worst case impact would have been significant in the medium to 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 to views from the east and would have had a significant adverse impact on amenity and local ecology and biodiversity. However, consideration has been given to the protection of biodiversity values and screening, as well as the 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).

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, so as to reduce visual impact, while impacts due to noise and dust are substantially attenuated.

It is expected that in the absence of mitigation measures (primarily noise, dust and visual) that there will be slight to moderate negative effects with respect to local amenity and residential receptors as a result of the development of the quarry at Castlepollard.



13.6 MITIGATION & MONITORING

Potential impacts on the material assets of the area can arise out of the construction, operational, and decommissioning stages of the quarry, and different sets of mitigation measures may be required under each stage. As an existing quarry with much of the infrastructure, including mobile crushing and screening plant on-site, only a brief construction phase is envisaged. The decommissioning stage will involve demolition and removal of infrastructure as well as landscaping, and thus will require mitigation measures largely relating to noise and dust suppression. The operational stage will require a full set of mitigation measures to mitigate the impacts of noise & vibration, dust, water quality, visual intrusion and traffic, particularly on sensitive receptors.

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. 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).

The applicant 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.

This quarry is located in a rural area of low population density. The boundaries of the quarry are enclosed by a combination of berms, hedgerows and fencing, which is designed to blend into the surrounding landscape. There will be ongoing monitoring to ensure that site boundaries are maintained in a proper manner, and these include thickening of hedgerows, fencing of the landholding, provision and maintenance of quarry signage, routine cleaning/housekeeping and the removal of unsightly features.

The development will be controlled and regularised in accordance with the scheme as outlined in this document, through continued environmental monitoring and by conditions imposed by the relevant regulatory authority. The development does not have a significant impact on lands, property or amenity within the area and hence there will be no significant effect on material assets.



13.7 REFERENCES

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- <http://siteviewer.comreg.ie/#explore> Communication Regulator
- <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/index.html> Central Statistics Office (CSO)
- <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/> Eirgrid
- <http://www.epa.ie/> Environmental Protection Agency
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- <http://www.gsi.ie/Mapping.htm> Geological Survey of Ireland Map Viewer
- <https://www.google.ie/maps> Google Maps
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- <http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/> National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
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- <http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/> Planning Dept., Westmeath County Council



13.8 FIGURES

Westmeath County Council Planning Authority - Inspection Purposes Only



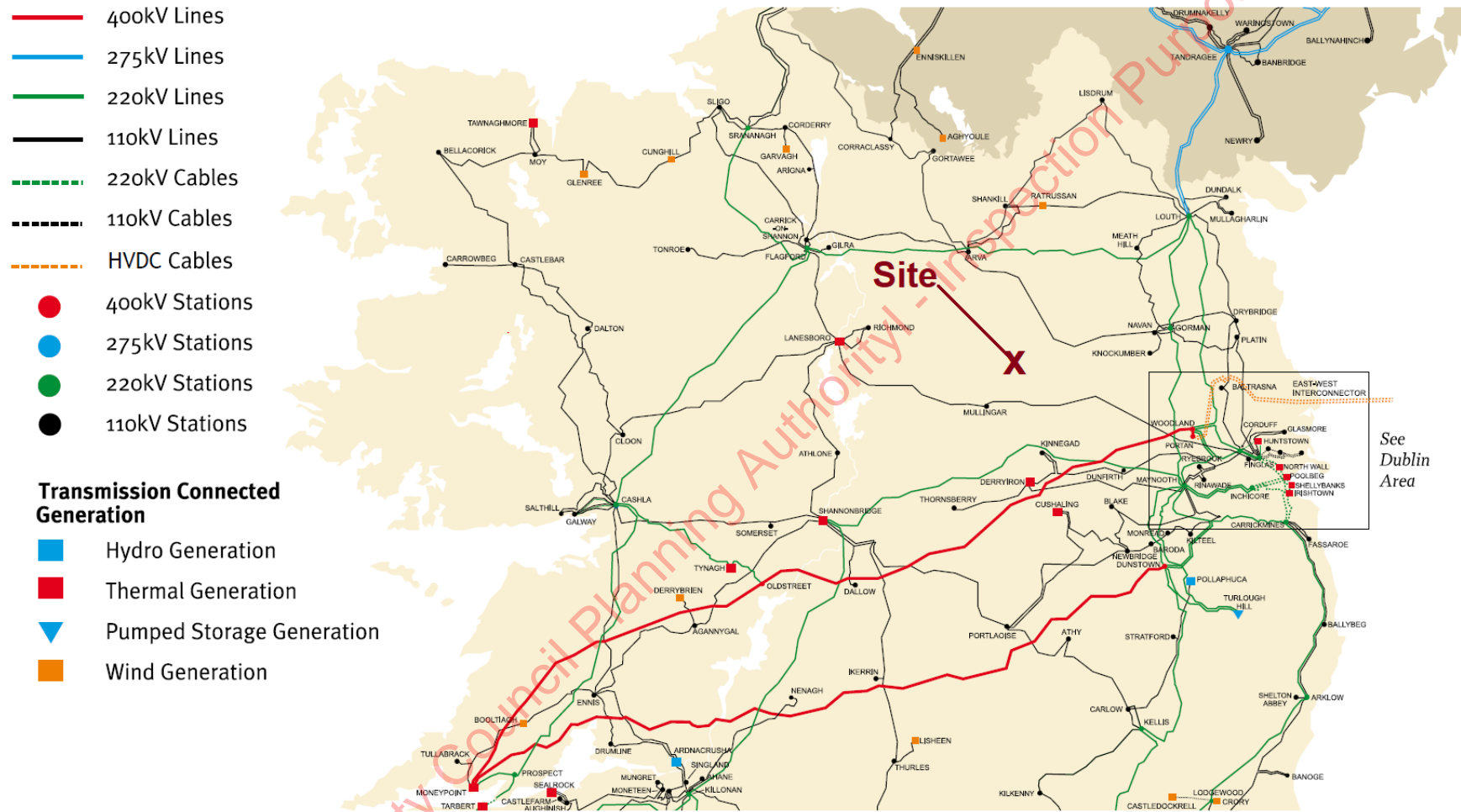


Figure 13.1 Eirgrid's Electricity Transmission Grid across central Ireland

Site located c. 15.5 km northeast of Mullingar. Scale: Horizontal Width of Field = 375 km. Extracted from Transmission System of Ireland (Eirgrid 2013).





Figure 13.2 Bord Gáis' Transmission and Distribution Gas Pipeline Network

Scale: Horizontal width of field = c. 350 km. Extracted from Bord Gáis (2020).