

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Location of the Subject Site

The subject site, aka 'Bellewstown Quarry' and proximate agricultural land, is located in Co. Meath in the townlands of Bellewstown, Hilltown Little, Gafney Little and Hilltown Great. The site comprises the existing rock quarry and a portion of land extending to the northeast on which it is proposed to deliver a new dedicated private quarry access road. The quarry area extends to approximately c. 39.4 hectares. The overall site size (development boundary) is 47.3 hectares, which includes an area of 7.9 hectares to accommodate the new access road to serve the quarry (see Figure 2.2). Figure 2.3 provides the OS Map of the subject site with development boundary provided.



Figure 2.1: Location of Subject Site (indicative site outlined red). (Source: Geohive, annotated and cropped by TPA 2022.)

The application site is located c.1.5km west of Bellewstown Cross. The site is c.30km north of Dublin's metropolitan area and c. 25km North of Swords. In addition, the site is c. 4km southeast of Duleek and c.8 km south of Drogheda Town.

The nearest large urban centre is the town of Drogheda with an estimated population of c. 41,000 people. In addition, the site is also in close proximity to Dublin's metropolitan area with an estimated population of c.1.4 million.

Access to the quarry is currently provided by Mullagh Road (running in a north-south direction and forms the eastern boundary to the subject quarry site) via Carnes Road, to the south of the site. Carnes Road (Local Road L5618) provides access to the site, through Bellewstown Village, from the M1 motorway.

A new private access road is proposed to the northeast of the site, as part of the subject application. This new access road will bypass Bellewstown village removing the need for vehicles to pass through Bellewstown Village to access the quarry.



Figure 2.2: Surrounding Context of Subject Site (indicative site outlined red). (Source: Googlemaps, annotated and cropped by TPA 2022.)

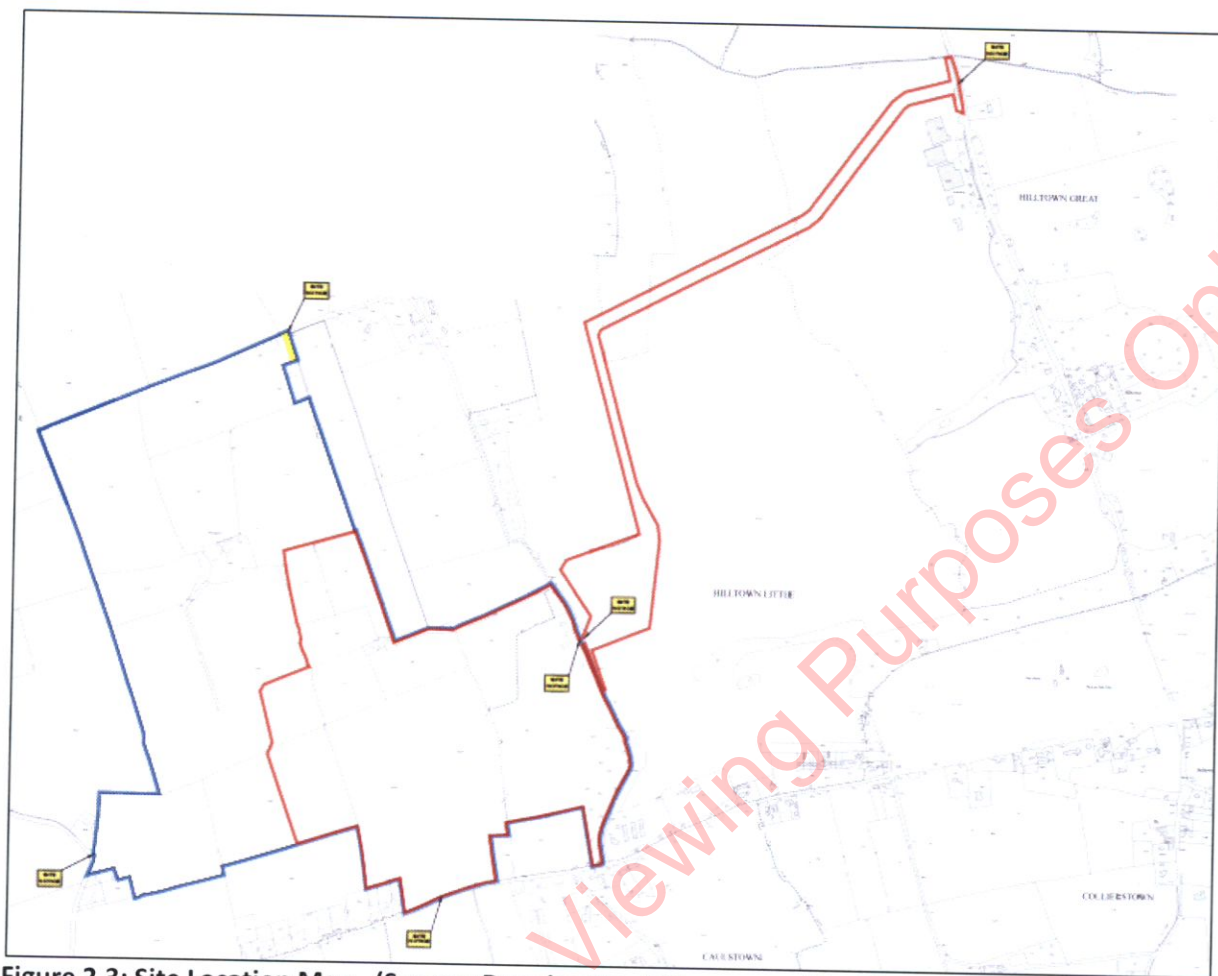


Figure 2.3: Site Location Map. (Source: Drawing No. KC1, prepared by Kilsaran.)



2.2 Description of the Subject Site

Bellewstown Quarry site comprises an established quarry, where rock is extracted primarily using explosives to blast exposed rock faces. The excavation comprises three benches, the lowest (Bench 3) at c.98m above Ordinance Datum (AOD), Bench 2 c. 116m AOD and the second higher Bench 1 is at an elevation of c. 129m AOD. A sump, located at the lowest part of the lowest bench, collects surface and groundwater, which is then periodically pumped to a constructed discharge water treatment facility located at the southern boundary of the property.

The field to the south of the quarry acts as a buffer between it and neighbouring residential properties.

Blasted rock is processed using mobile crushing and screening plant to produce various aggregate grades for sale to the construction industry.

The quarry accommodates a number of ancillary structures, which are located to the east of the site close to the existing quarry entrance. These structures include a workshop where plant maintenance is undertaken, office facilities, a shed, a weighbridge / shipping office, a weighbridge, wheelwash and disused bunded fuel storage tanks.

There are no rivers, streams or lakes within the boundary of the site. All surface water within the quarry is captured at the quarry sump, with water being pumped intermittently from the sump (manually controlled) through a discharge water treatment facility to a specific discharge point. The discharged water flows via a culvert under the public road into a land drain, which in turn flows into Lunderstown Stream, which in turn flows into the Nanny River. A groundwater monitoring programme has been in place at the quarry since early 2008. For further information, please refer to Chapter 8 of the EIAR.

Landscaped screening mounds are located around the perimeter of the quarry, with site boundaries adjacent Mullagh Road comprising of chainlink fences for added security.

The area of the site that will comprise the dedicated access road comprises agricultural land (tillage). Hedgerows are at the proposed new entry / exit points to the new road in addition to landscaping along the route. A farm is located directly south of the easternmost access / exit point. In the northeast, this part of the site connects with the L1615; in the southwest it connects with the Mullagh Road.



Figure 2.4: Existing Quarry entrance. (Source: Googlemaps.ie.)

2.3 The Existing Quarry

The existing quarry at Bellewstown was permitted by way of substitute consent by An Bord Pleanála (Ref. No. PL17.SU0101). The continued extraction at the quarry and its expansion to the north and west of the existing void area was previously permitted by An Bord Pleanála under Ref. No. PL17.QD0013 (in accordance with section 37L of the *Planning and Development Acts, 2000* (as amended)) (hereafter referred to the 37L development).

Planning permission received under the 37L development was granted for a period of 10 years (Condition No. 3) by An Bord Pleanála on 24th October 2018. Furthermore, Condition No. 4 limited the number of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGVs) movements per day to 32 No. loads (64 No. two-way) (versus 81 No. loads proposed).

The development permitted under the 37L development consists of the extension of the existing quarry extraction area to c. 17.3 ha and the deepening of the quarry floor to 98mAOD using conventional blasting techniques. Extracted material is processed using mobile crushing and screening plant and stockpiled in advance of haulage. Landscaped overburden and topsoil storage/screening berms are included, together with a landscaping and rehabilitation plan to be fully implemented upon completion of quarrying. Ancillary site works permitted include a new wheelwash, a new septic tank, a new percolation area and two bunded fuel tanks.

The total volume of recoverable reserves within the permitted quarry area is estimated at between 11.0 to 11.5 million tonnes. The 37L development proposed a level of extraction of c. 450,000 tonnes per annum, giving the production life for the extraction area of 25 years, allowing for fluctuations in demand. This anticipated production level was equivalent to an average 81 No. daily truck loads.

In restricting the life of the permission to 10 years (Condition No. 3), and limiting the maximum number of HGV movements to 32 No. loads (Condition No. 4), the Board's *Order* effectively limited the extractable reserve to c. 1.8million tonnes over the 10 year period.

2.4 Surrounding Area

The wider quarry lands, which are not in use for quarrying operations, are in agricultural use, for grazing livestock and for silage production. These fields are enclosed by hedgerows.

Residential properties in the surrounding area are primarily located to the south and southeast of the subject site along Carnes Road. As shown in Figure 2.5, these properties are primarily screened from the quarry operations by a mature stand of trees.



Figure 2.5: Residential Area South of the Subject Site. (Source: googlemaps.ie.)

The subject site is located on the Hill of Crockafatha. As such, the sloping topography of the area, rising from south, ensures the residential properties to the south are further screened from quarry operations.

Significant developments in the area include Bellewstown Golf Club and Bellewstown Racecourse. Horse Racing is an operation of particular significance to the Bellewstown area, with the tradition dating back centuries. The first record of racing here appears in the August edition of the Dublin Gazette and the Weekly Courier in 1726. There was originally a cricket ground in the middle of the race track. Racing continues to occur on an annual basis, taking place during the course of the summer.¹

¹Source: <https://bellewstownraces.ie/about-us/>