11

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

11 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Ltd (CSR), Landscape Architects and Planners.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was informed by a desktop study and a survey of the site and receiving environment in November 2023. This report identifies and discusses the landscape and the receiving environment in relation to continuation of quarrying activities at the site. The site of the development is located along and just within the border of northeast County Kildare and lies ca.1.8 km northwest of Blessington in County Wicklow.

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and accompanying Conceptual Restoration Plan was carried out by Ronan Finnegan (BSc PG Fip LA CMLI). Ronan is a Chartered Landscape Architect (Charted Member of the Landscape Institute UK) with over 13 years' experience in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) in Ireland and the UK for a wide range of development types. These include a number of infrastructural projects, including road schemes, quarry developments, renewable energy, residential and commercial development, in both rural and urban contexts.

Oversight of the chapter was provided by Jamie Ball, MILI, Senior Landscape Planner of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds.

Macro Works Ltd., a Dublin-based landscape consultancy firm specialising in LVIA, captured the baseline photography for the 2020 Application, as well as generating Viewpoint maps, Zone of Theoretical Visibility Maps and 13 No. verified photomontages. Thus, several of Macro Works graphical outputs from the 2020 application have also been used as part of this application.

11.1.1 STUDY AREA

According to Section 5.2 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition 2013):

"*The study area should include the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape around it, which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner.*"

The study area extents for this LVIA derives from the nature of the existing site's quarrying activity and consideration of its past activity within the site between September 2020 to the present day.

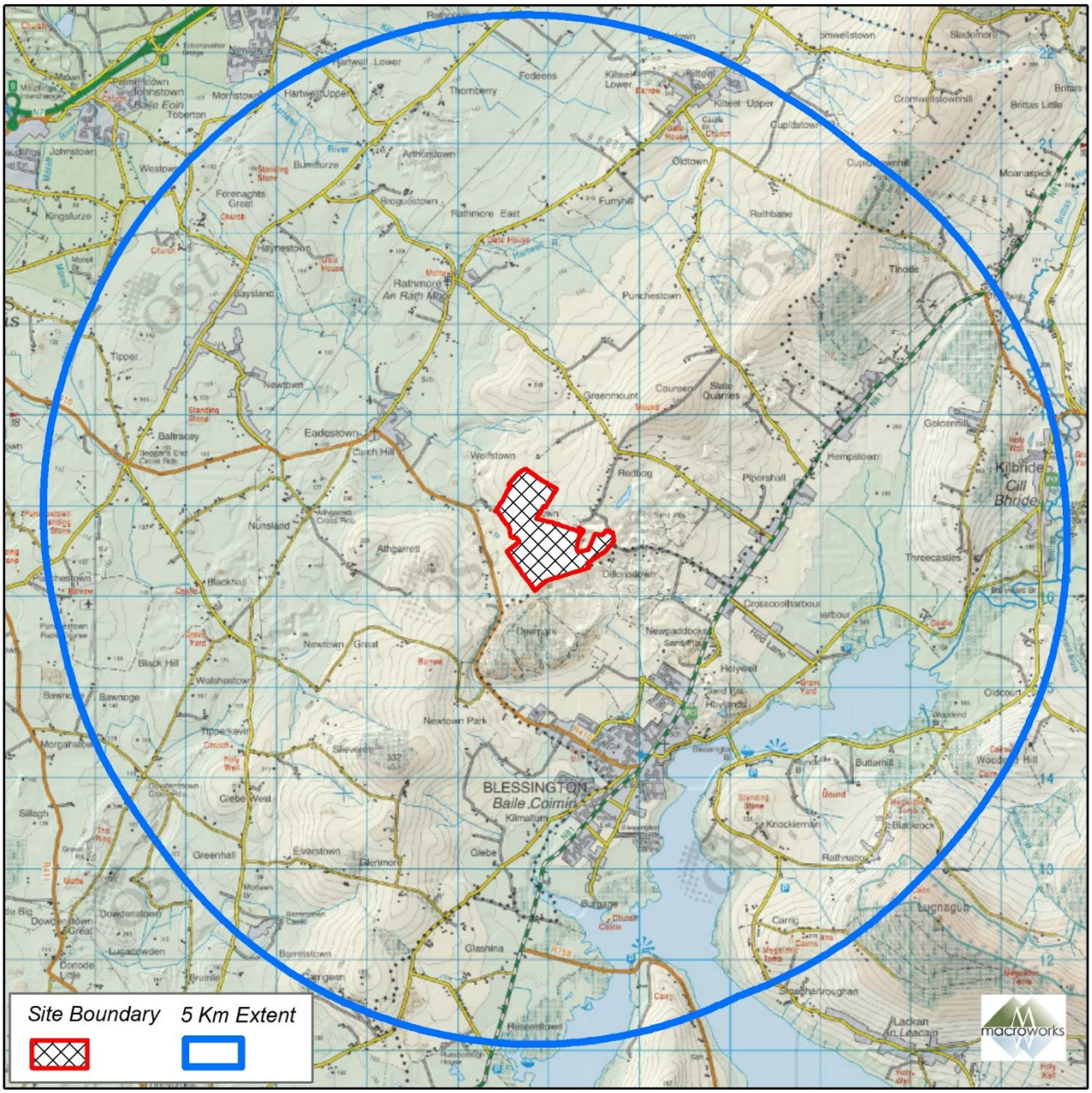


Figure 11-1 - Study Area extents map (Source: map courtesy of Macro Works Ltd.)

While there is a low capacity for significant impacts to arise beyond 2 km from the site, due to the nature of the development works occurring with an existing quarry, a 5 km study area has been selected in this instance (Figure 11-1, above). However, an emphasis will be placed on receptors within 0-2km of the site, as these are more/most likely to have the capacity to experience significant visual effects.

It should not be inferred that the development is unlikely to be visible from any location beyond the study area, but, more importantly, that the subject development is unlikely to influence such receptors in a significant manner.

11.1.1.1 EIA Project & Substitute Consent Areas

The EIA project area, defined in Figure 11-2 below, is referred to under the heading ‘Site and Immediate Vicinity’. The extent of the Substitute Consent application Site falls within the EIA area as defined in Figure 11.1b below, However the LVIA study area also includes part of the wider landscape as outlined above.

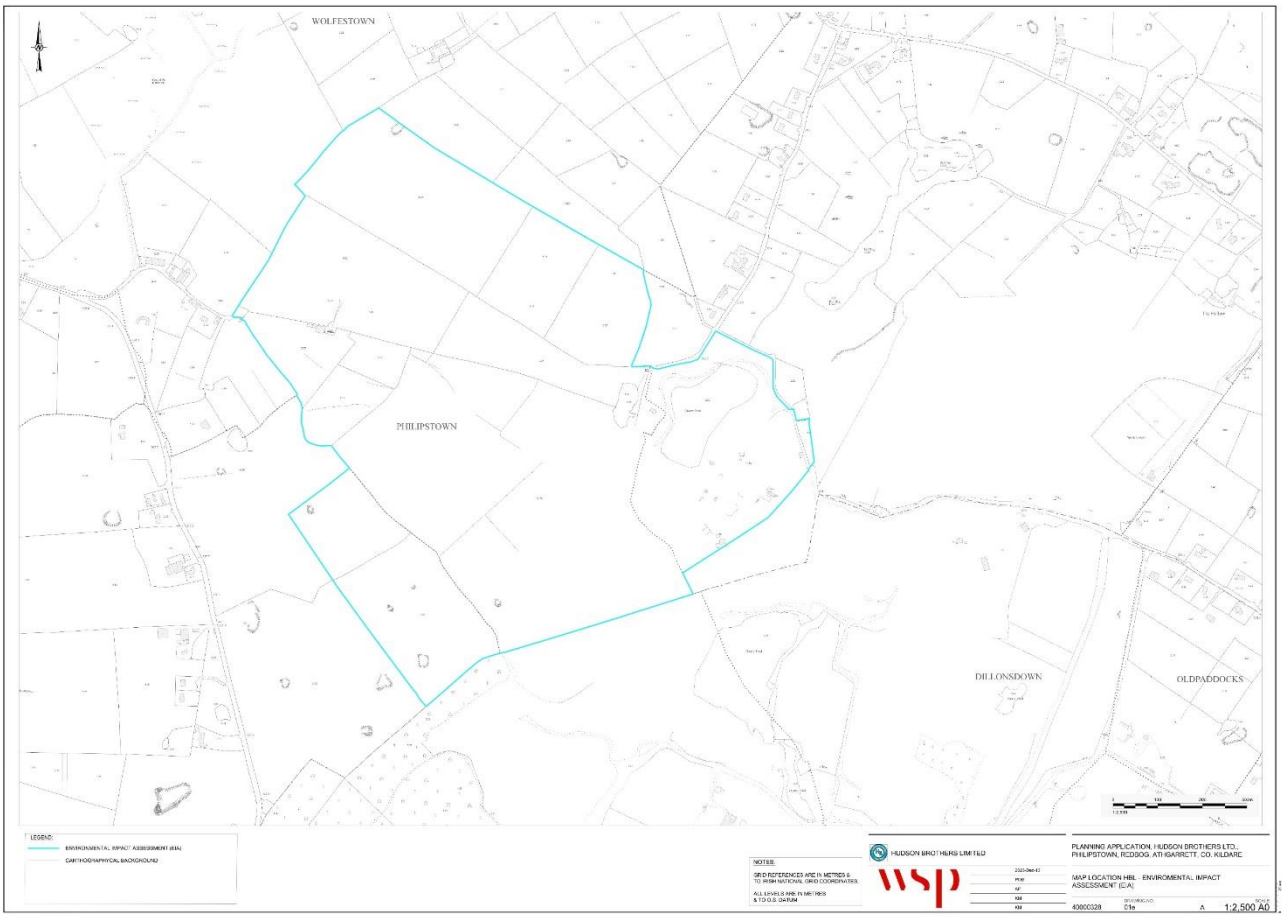


Figure 11-2:– Project EIA Boundary

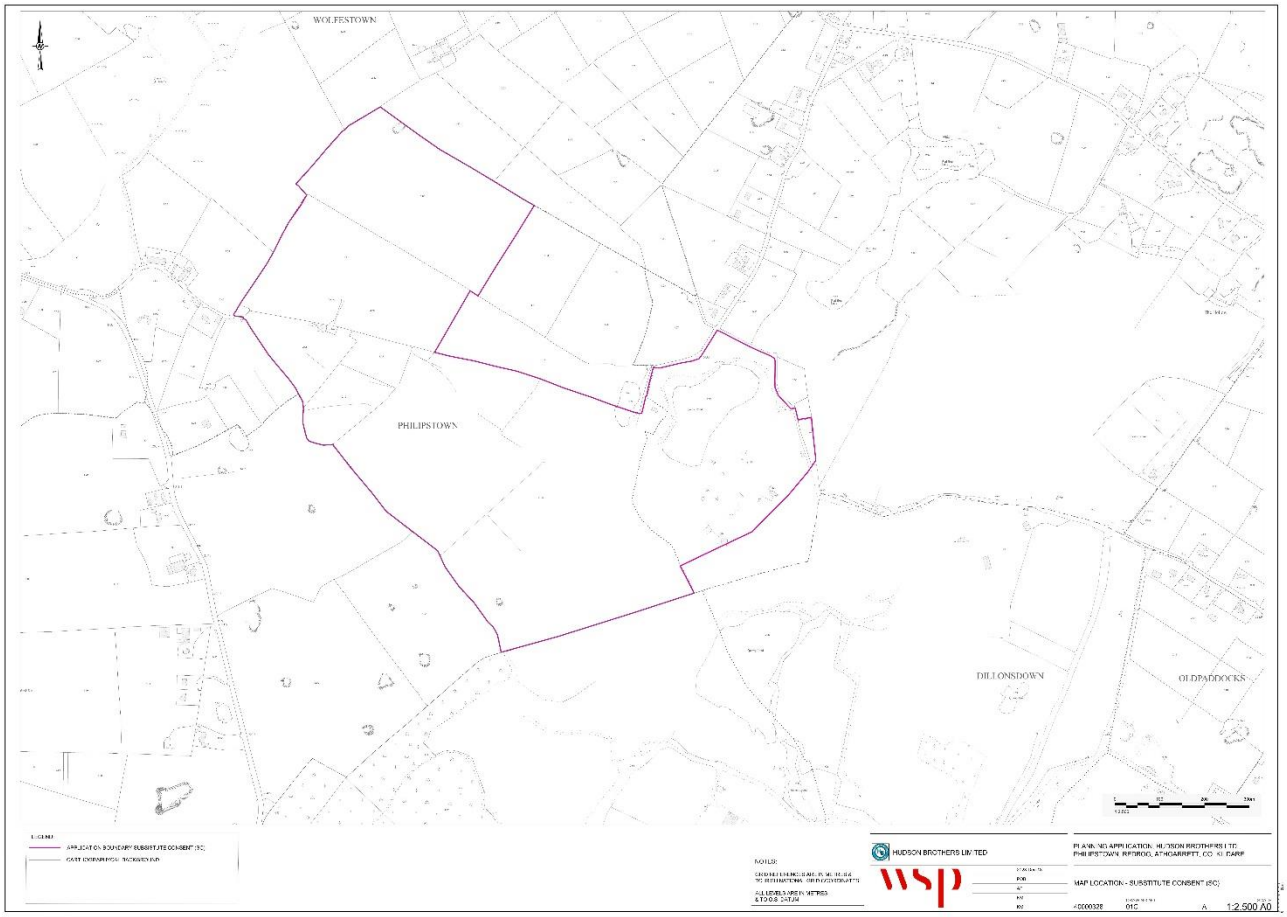


Figure 11-3 - Project Substitute Consent (SC) Area

11.1.2 GEOGRAPHICAL AND TEMPORAL SCOPE

There is a requirement to seek planning permission through the s261A process for the following components:

- Continuation of aggregate extraction and processing permitted under WCC reg. ref. 07/0267.
- Replacement of holding tank at the canteen/office with a proprietary wastewater treatment system.
- Ancillary site works.

The statutory notices forming part of the subject substitute consent application summarises the assessed development as follows:

> *'We, Hudson Brothers Limited, intend to apply for substitute consent under section 261A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for development at this site at New Paddocks, Blessington, Co Wicklow W91 CH68 within the townlands of Athgarrett, Philipstown and Redbog, Co Kildare.*
>
> *The development consists of a quarry over an area of 71.9 ha. with a final floor of approximately 188 mAOD. The reserve consists of sand and gravel which is extracted by mechanical means, and sandstone (greywacke) which is extracted by mechanical means. The excavated sand and gravel is transported to a plant area for washing, grading and processing.*

The excavated rock material is crushed and graded at the working face by mobile plant. The quarry has an existing processing plant and maintenance area of approximately 5 ha. that currently holds 1 no. maintenance shed (including underbody truck wash on a concrete apron surrounding the shed, staff welfare facilities [shower and toilet], proprietary wastewater treatment system and percolation area, interceptor and soakaway), 1 no. generator/power house (within a shipping container), 1 no. control room, 1 no. office and canteen, a water recycling plant, an aggregate processing plant (washing, crushing, and screening), 1 no. bunded fuel tank and generator room, 1 no. storage shed, 1 no. shipping container storage structure, and 1 no. shipping container. Within this plant/maintenance shed area is a fuel storage and refuelling area. The quarry is located predominantly in Co. Kildare but accessed via a shared laneway connecting to a single location on the N81 which is located within Co. Wicklow. Other items not specified in this application will be the subject of a separate planning application and the requisite statutory process of consultation and determination.

The existing operational quarry has been in use since the early 1950's and has been registered under S.261 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 with Kildare County Council under Quarry Ref. No. QR/42 and with Wicklow County Council under Quarry Ref. No. QY/43. Subsequent planning permission for continuance of quarrying operations was granted by the Wicklow County Council under Reg. Ref. 06/6932 in October 2009 for a period of 25 years and by Kildare County Council under Reg. Ref. 07/267 in April 2010, and subsequently by An Bord Pleanála under their Reg. Ref. PL09.235502 for a period of 10 years, which expired on 18th September 2020 after which quarrying stopped for a period.

Upon invalidation of a planning application under Kildare County Council Reg. Reg. 20/532 for continuance of the production of construction aggregate beyond 18th September 2020 and to extend the extraction area by just over 13 ha., the applicant sought leave to apply for substitute consent on 8th October 2021, which was granted by the Board on 1st August 2023 under An Board Pleanála Reg. Ref. 311622. This substitute consent application is made concurrent with an application to further develop the quarry at this location under section 37L of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

This substitute consent application is accompanied by a remedial Environmental Impact Assessment Report (rEIAR) and remedial Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening Report. The rEIAR is for an EIA project unit over 95.8 ha. that encompasses the area of the substitute consent application (71.9 ha.), the concurrent further development of the quarry application under S.37L, and the quarry as permitted under Planning Reg. Ref. 07/267 and PL09.235502.'

This substitute consent application is made concurrent with an application to further develop the quarry at this location under section 37L of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. This substitute consent application is accompanied by a remedial Environmental Impact Assessment Report (rEIAR) and remedial Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment. The rEIAR is for an EIA project unit over 95.8 ha. that encompasses the area of the substitute consent application (71.9 ha.), the concurrent further development of the quarry application under S.37L, and the quarry as permitted under Planning Reg. Ref. 07/267 and PL09.235502

In terms of geographical scope, this substitute consent application site comprises some 71.9 ha that encompasses previous grant of planning permission by Kildare County Council (KCC) under their reg.

ref. 07/0267 for a quarry and aggregates operations. The site is accessed off a shared laneway connecting to the N81 which is a national road. The town of Blessington is located some 1.8 km to the south of the application site.

The undulating land surrounding the application site slopes upwards in a north-westerly direction to the north, beyond the application site and away in a south westerly direction to the south of the application site. The broader Hudson Brothers operation in this location straddles the border between KCC and Wicklow County Council (WCC). Planning permission for a quarry and extraction of aggregates was granted under WCC reg. ref, 06/6932 and that permission runs for a period of 25 years and has a substantial period to run before expiring.

The administration function of the applicant's operation on site is located within County Wicklow (permitted under 06/6932 above). The lands that are the subject of this rEIAR is roughly triangular in shape. A number of other aggregate companies operate from sites adjacent to this application site. The sand and gravel pits in the Blessington area are a major source of sand and gravel used in the production of construction material in the Greater Dublin and mid Leinster regions. Other land uses surrounding the application site are for residential (single dwellings) and agriculture purposes, mainly pastoral grazing of sheep and cattle and also forestry. Land uses in the area have remained consistent during assessment period (September 2020 to the present day). The immediate character of the lands is rural in nature with low density, one-off roadside dwellings and roadside housing and agricultural activities. Further south of the application site towards the town of Blessington the landscape becomes predominantly peri-urban in nature.

In terms of temporal scope the planning permission by which quarrying, and extraction of aggregates operated within the jurisdiction of KCC under 07/0267 expired on 18 September 2020. It is clear, therefore, that the existing operation by the applicant has the benefit of planning permission for those lands located only within County Wicklow but not within County Kildare. This substitute consent application, if permission is granted, is a means of regularising planning over those lands located within County Kildare for operations and development that have occurred since then, and to the current period.

The subject lands have been used for quarrying since the 1950s. As such, the quarry and associated uses are an established feature of the landscape and the main feature of the rEIAR project lands.

11.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

11.2.1 LEGISLATION

The importance of the role of landscape and protection of its character through establishing planning policies and designations as part of the decision making at national through to county council level is governed by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Planning and Development Act has applied the same meaning to landscape as in Article 1 of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) 2000, ratified by Ireland in 2004, which states Landscape as being an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. The Irish Government has produced the National Landscape Strategy 2014-2025 to implement the ELC which aims to implement six core objectives through decision making including recognise landscape in law, national landscape character assessment, landscape policies, increased landscape awareness, education and public participation.

The general EIA legislation and guidance documents are listed in Chapter 1 (Introduction) of this rEIAR.

11.2.2 RELEVANT POLICIES AND PLANS

This section sets out a review of landscape related planning policy of the county development plans of KCC and neighbouring WCC, as both local authorities fall within the extent of the study area. The review includes the current adopted and recently expired CDP of both local authorities, as this rEIAR baseline covers the period from September 2020 to present. It includes:

- Adopted Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029.
- Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (expired).
- Adopted Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022 (expired).

The local planning and other policies from the above development plans are reviewed, which identify key relevant development objectives and policies.

11.2.2.1 Adopted Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (hereafter referred to as KCDP) was adopted on 28 January 2023.

Section 9.9 Mineral Resources & Extractive Industry

Section 9.9.1 'Post Closure of Extractive Industry After-Use Strategy for Quarries,' sets out the County Council's 'after use' strategy for quarries. Rehabilitating ecology and biodiversity and restoration plans will provide for a mosaic of habitats. Infilling and backfilling may be preferable than reverting to agricultural grassland for ecological and biodiversity purposes. It states:

'The conditions of quarry after-use and rehabilitation frequently involves the restoration of quarries, as far as possible, to their original appearance. This may result in the loss of key features that may ironically, have some ecological benefit or rich biodiversity interest…

'Therefore, in developing any after-use strategy and/or restoration plan, there will be a requirement to prepare a detailed survey and assessment of the intrinsic ecological character first (by an appropriate ecologist), identifying the range and location of key species of flora and fauna on site. The rehabilitation plan should work around these habitats and species in a process known as Rehabilitation Ecology. Ideally, the final restoration plan will provide for a mosaic of habitats, including, for example, cliff/sand or gravel banks, ponds, wetlands, open meadow (appropriately seeded), naturally recolonizing scrubland and planted woodland (i.e., saplings of native tree species) …'

RD O44 Require applications for mineral or other extraction to include (but not limited to):

'…A detailed landscaping plan to be submitted indicating proposed screening for the operational life of the site. The predominant use of native plant species in the proposed landscaping plan will be expected. Detailed landscaping and quarry restoration plans. Habitats and species surveying shall be carried out and shall influence the restoration plan for the site…'

Thus, a restoration plan has been included as part of this application and can be found in Appendix 11B.

Section 13.3 Landscape Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment was carried out in 2004 which divided the county into distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The site lies within the 'Eastern Uplands' Landscape Character Area (LCA) which has been graded with a landscape sensitivity rating of 'Class 3 - High,' which is regarded as:

"Areas with reduced capacity to accommodate uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regard to prevalent sensitivity factors."

Table 13.3 of the KCDP (Figure 11-4 below) sets out the likely compatibility between a range of land-uses and each of the county's principal LCAs. This table outlines the 'Eastern Uplands', within which the application site is located, as having its most compatible land uses being "agriculture, forestry and tourism projects." For all other land-uses, including extraction (i.e. sand & gravel), it has rated these as having a "medium" compatibility.

Table 13.4 (Figure 11-5 below) further sets out the "likely compatibility between a range of land-uses and proximity to Principal Landscape Sensitivity Factors." The compatibility matrix considers not only the confines of the Site and its location but its proximity within 300 m of Principal Landscape Sensitivity Factors.

The application site consists of an active quarry and pasture, with the pastureland in the southwest being located close (i.e. within 300 m) to a ridgeline, as illustrated in Figure 11-6, below. In terms of the compatibility of 'sand and gravel extraction,' it is "very unlikely to be compatible" (i.e. '0' rating) if located within 300 m of a ridgeline; "compatible only in certain circumstances" (i.e. '2' rating) if located within 300 m of mixed forestry and is "likely to be compatible with great care" (i.e. '3' rating) if located within 300 m of "agricultural land with natural vegetation."

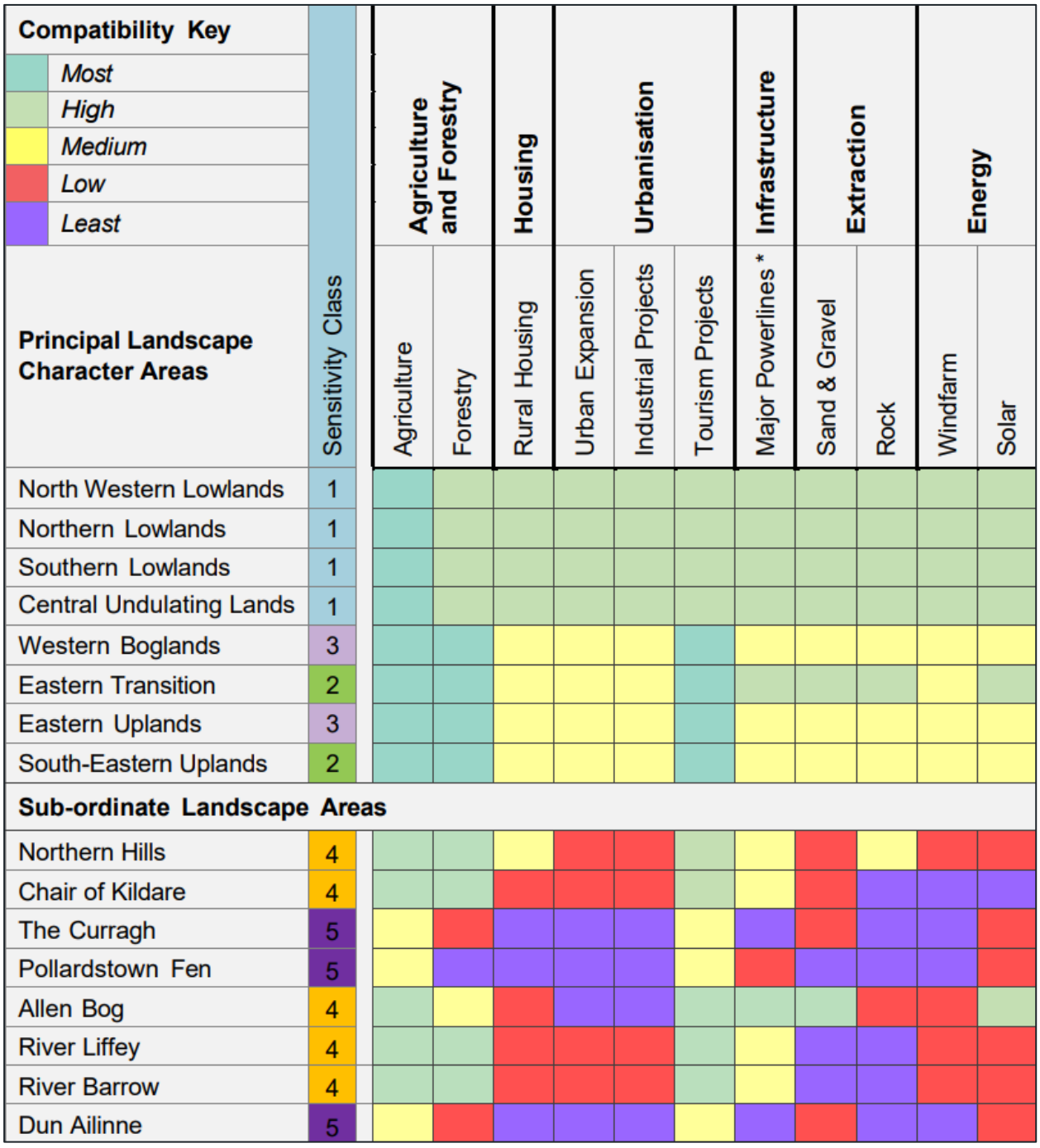


Figure 11-4: ***Table 13.3*** **from the KCDP –** ***'Likely compatibility between a range of land-uses and Principal Landscape Areas.'***

5 - Likely to be very compatible in most circumstances. 4 - Likely to be compatible with reasonable care. 3 - Likely to be compatible with great care. 2 - Compatible only in certain circumstances. 1 - Compatible only in exceptional circumstances. 0 - Very unlikely to be compatible.	Agriculture and Forestry		Housing	Urbanisation			infrastructure	Extraction		Energy	
Proximity within 300m of Principal Landscape Sensitivity Factors.	Agriculture	Forestry	Rural Housing	Urban Expansion	Industrial Projects	Tourism Projects	Major Powerlines	Sand and Gravel	Rock	Windfarm	Solar
Major Rivers and Water bodies	5	5	2	2	2	3	2	1	0	1	0
Canals	5	5	2	2	2	3	2	1	0	1	1
Ridgelines	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0
Green Urban Areas	4	5	2	0	0	4	3	3	3	2	2
Broad-Leaved Forestry	3	5	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	1	2
Mixed Forestry	3	5	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	1	2
Natural Grasslands	5	2	2	1	1	4	2	1	1	2	2
Moors and Heathlands	2	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	1
Agricultural Land with Natural Vegetation	5	5	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2
Peat Bogs	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	2	1
Scenic View	5	5	2	1	1	5	1	3	0	0	2
Scenic Route	5	5	2	1	1	5	1	3	0	0	2

Figure 11-5: ***Table 13.4 from the KCDP – 'Likely compatibility between a range of land-uses and proximity to Principal Landscape Sensitivity Factors.'***

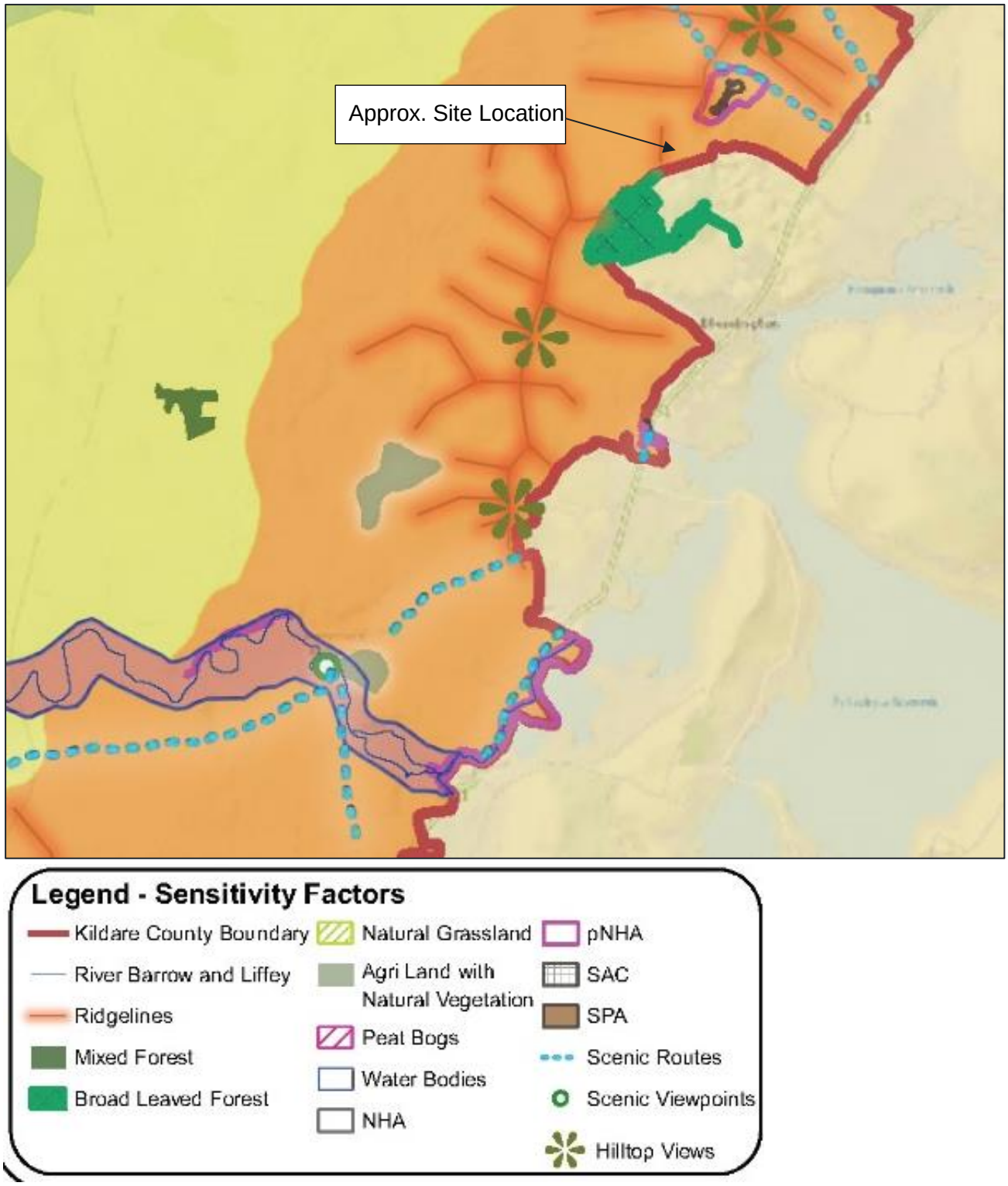


Figure 11-6: Extract of KCDP Landscape Sensitivity Map V1-13.2

In terms of policy for the protection and enhancement of the landscape policy LR P1 states:

'LR P1 Protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape.'

Objectives in relation to landscape impact of quarrying:

'LR O7 Restrict the quarrying of sensitive sites within the Landscape Character Areas in line with Table 13.3 and Table 13.4 above and to protect and conserve the ecological, archaeological, biodiversity and visual amenity surrounding quarry sites.'

'LR O8 Ensure that all quarrying activities and projects associated with the extractive industry comply with all relevant Planning and Environmental Legislation and the Guidelines for the Protection of Biodiversity within the Extractive Industry document 'Wildlife, Habitats & the Extractive Industry'.

Section 13.4 Areas of High Amenity

The Site is located within the East Kildare Uplands Area of High Amenity, which covers the same extent as the East Kildare Landscape Character Area. The KCDP describes the East Kildare Uplands Area of High Amenity (KCDP Section 13.4.12) as:

'The Eastern Uplands are located in the east of the county and are part of the Wicklow Mountain complex. The topography rises from the lowland plains, through undulating terrain to the highest point of 379m above sea level (O.D.) at Cupidstownhill, east of Kilteel. The elevated nature of this area provides a defined skyline with scenic views over the central plains of Kildare and the neighbouring Wicklow Mountains which further define the skyline and the extent of visibility. The East Kildare Uplands are rural in character with a number of scenic views from elevated vantage points. The general land use on the uplands is pasture, with some tillage, quarrying and forestry.

'Along a number of roads, which cross the upper and lower slopes of the uplands, there are long-distance views towards the Kildare lowlands and the Chair of Kildare. The sloping land provides this area with its distinctive character and intensifies the visual prominence and potential adverse impact of any feature over greater distances. Public roads traversing the slope provides an increased potential for development to penetrate primary and secondary ridgelines when viewed from lower areas and in a few areas the recent pattern of ribbon development obscures views across the plains of Kildare.

'In the Eastern Kildare Uplands, nearly all ridgelines are secondary when viewed from the lowland areas, as the Wicklow Mountains to the east define the skyline (i.e. form primary ridgelines). Gently undulating topography and shelter vegetation provided by conifer and woodland plantation can provide a shielding of built form. Views of the River Liffey Valley as well as of the Poulaphouca Reservoir are available from the hilltops and high points on some of the local roads.'

Relevant policy for the protection of high amenity areas includes:

LR P2 Protect High Amenity areas from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

Section 13.4 Scenic Routes and Protected Views

The KCDP has designated a number of scenic routes, hilltop views and scenic viewpoints across the county which are highly valued. These are listed in the KCDP's Tables 13.5, 13.6 and 13.7 and the locations are mapped on Map V1 - 13.3 of the KCDP (Figure 11-7). The current KCDP has expanded

on the previous KCDP views by labelling the hilltop views, as well as relabelling the previous scenic route no. 22 to become scenic route no. 20 and 30. However, scenic route no. 12 remains the same.

The scenic routes and views considered relevant to the site due to their proximity or potential for some degree of visibility include:

- *Scenic Route 12 - Views west of the Kildare Plains from the Redbog Area and views towards Caureen from Rathmore crossroads to Pipershall along the L6038 road.*
- *Hilltop View 08 – Caurcen Hill*

Section 13.5.1 'Views to and from Hills' states:

"As the landform of the county is generally flat, with very little variation in topography and predominantly low vegetation, extensive views can be obtained from hilltops, allowing vistas over long distances, and similarly from the lowland areas the eye is drawn to the primary and secondary ridgelines that define the skyline throughout the county. Ridgelines are conspicuous features of the natural landscape as they perform an important role as dominant landscape focal points. It is important that development does not interrupt the integrity of ridgelines. Development on steeply sloping land can be viewed over greater distances."

However, it is worth noting that the overwhelming majority of such Hilltop Views listed within the KCDP, are from within private and/or agricultural land, with no public accessibility. Therefore these views tend to solely represent landowners, or their employees, actively working the land. This is also the case for the aforementioned Hilltop View 08 – Caurcen Hill', which is located more than 1.5km northeast of this application site, whose major land use is intensive pastoral production. In addition, the primary views from Caurcen Hill are to the east/southeast, across the picturesque Blessington Lakes and towards the Wicklow Mountains, whereas the site is located more than 1.5 km to the southwest of Caurcen Hill.

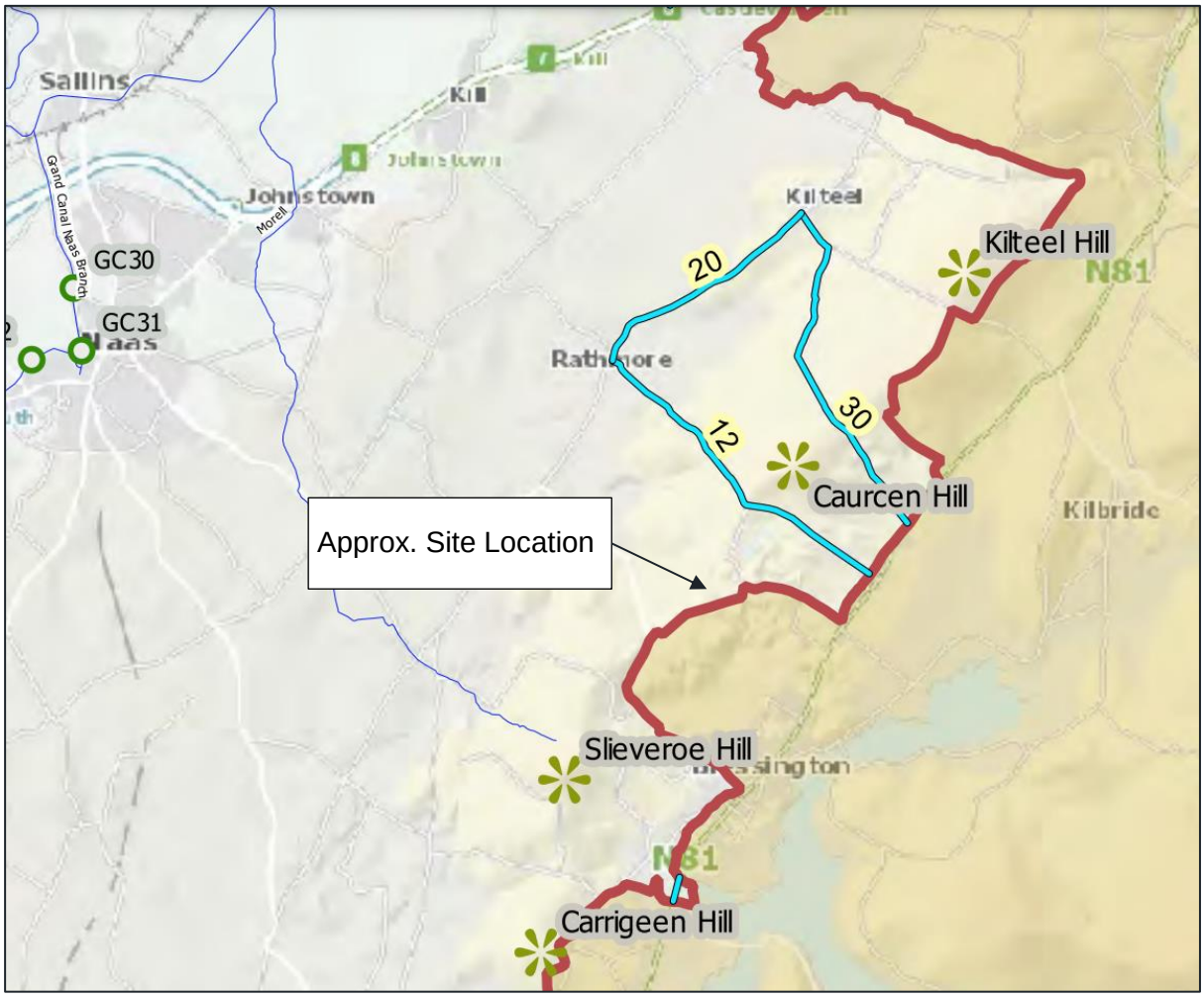


Figure 11-7: Extract of Scenic Route and Viewpoints Map V1 - 13.3 of the KCDP

Section 12.6 - Designated Sites

The EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/ EEC) and the EU Habitats Directive (European Directive 92/43/EEC) provides for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network of sites of highest biodiversity importance for rare and threatened habitats and species across the EU. The Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

Under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated to conserve species and habitats of national importance and sites of geological interest.

There are no Designated Sites within the Site. The Designated Sites within Kildare County Boundary that are closest to the Site are:

- Red Bog 000397 SAC
- Red Bog 000397 pNHA

These Designated Sites are located to the immediate northeast and east of the Site.

Relevant policy includes:

'BI P1 Integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features by applying the mitigation hierarchy to potential adverse impacts on important ecological features (whether designated or not), i.e. avoiding impacts where possible, minimising adverse impacts, and if significant effects are unavoidable by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate. Opportunities for biodiversity net gain are encouraged.

BI P2 Seek to contribute to maintaining or restoring the conservation status of all sites designated for nature conservation or proposed for designation in accordance with European and national legislation and agreements. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Ramsar Sites and Statutory Nature Reserves.

BI P3 Ensure that any proposal for development within or adjacent to a Natural Heritage Area (NHA), Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the biodiversity, ecological, geological and landscape value of the site, particularly plant and animal species listed under the Wildlife Acts and the Habitats and Birds Directive including their habitats.

BI P4 Ensure that any new development proposal does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species which are protected by law.'

Section 12.7 - Protected Habitats and species

'BI P4 Ensure that any new development proposal does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species which are protected by law.'

Section 12.9 - Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

'BI P6 Recognise the important contribution trees and hedgerows make to the county biodiversity resource climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation.

'BI P8 Ensure that Kildare's wetlands and watercourses are retained for their biodiversity, climate change mitigation properties and flood protection values and at a minimum to achieve and maintain at least good ecological status for all wetlands and watercourses in the county by, at the latest, 2027 in line with the Water Framework Directive and Ramsar Convention.'

Extractive Industries:

Chapter 9 of this KCDP outlines the council policies and objectives for the extraction industry and its restoration with regards to landscape include:

Relevant policy governing quarries and the extractive industries includes the following:

RD P8: Support and manage the appropriate future development of Kildare's natural aggregate resources in appropriate locations to ensure adequate supplies are available to meet the future needs of the county and the region in line with the principles of sustainable development and environmental management and tor require operators to appropriately manage extraction sites when extraction has ceased.

Relevant objectives covering quarries and the extractive industries include the following:

RD 042: Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)

- Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna.

- Zones of Archaeological Potential.

- The vicinity of a recorded monument.

- Sensitive landscape areas as identified in Chapter 13 of this Plan.

- Scenic views and prospects.

- Protected Structures.

- Established rights of way and walking routes.

- Potential World Heritage Sites in Kildare on the UNESCO Tentative List, Ireland.

RD O44:

A detailed landscaping plan to be submitted indicating proposed screening for the operational life of the site. The predominant use of native plant species in the proposed landscaping plan will be expected.

Detailed landscaping and quarry restoration plans. Habitats and species surveying shall be carried out and shall influence the restoration plan for the site.

Comprehensive Site Restoration Plan and/or After-Use Strategy should have regard to the principles of 'Rehabilitation Ecology' as follows:

RD O50:

Ensure the satisfactory and sensitive re-instatement and/or re-use of disused quarries and extraction facilities, where active extraction use has ceased. Future uses should include amenity, recreation and biodiversity areas shall be informed by an assessment of the specific site/lands and shall be subject to an ecological impact assessment or other environmental assessments as appropriate. Where it is proposed to reclaim, regenerate, or rehabilitate old quarries by filling or re-grading with inert soil or similar material, or to use worked-out quarries as disposal locations for inert materials, the acceptability of the proposal shall be evaluated against the criteria set out in Section 15.9.6 of this Plan. The Council will resist development that would significantly or unnecessarily alter the natural landscape and topography, including land infilling/ reclamation projects or projects involving significant landscape remodelling, unless it can be demonstrated that the development would enhance the landscape and / or not give rise to adverse impacts.

RD O51: Require that quarry remediation plans provide for environmental benefit, biodiversity and re-wilding in all instances. The 80% requirement for environmental/biodiversity may be waived at sites closer to urban areas where a significant portion of the site is being provided for sports, recreation, and amenity.

11.2.2.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (expired)

Many of the above landscape policies within the adopted KCDP 2023-2029 have been carried over from the now expired Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023. That now expired KCDP was in place through the initial baseline period of this application, between September 2020 and January 2023, when the current KCDP 2023-2029 was adopted by the council.

Landscape Character Assessment

The landscape policies of this expired KCDP are found within Chapter 14 of that development plan and have similarly been developed up from the original 2004 landscape character assessment. This KCDP had outlined the same landscape sensitivity and compatibility ratings for land use for sand and gravel within the Eastern Kildare Uplands LCA and the same Eastern Kildare Uplands Area of High Amenity as outlined above in the KCDP 2023-2029, along with the same supporting landscape policies noted below.

Relevant general Landscape policies include:

LA1: Ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity is an important factor in determining development uses. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design, type and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.

LA2: Protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape.

LA3: Seek to ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerows, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development.

Upland Character Areas, including East Kildare Uplands (Area of High Amenity) policies include the following:

LU1: Ensure that development will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere with or detract from scenic upland vistas, when viewed from areas nearby, scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.

LU2: Ensure that developments on steep slopes (i.e. >10%) will not be conspicuous or have a disproportionate visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from relevant scenic routes, viewpoints and settlements.

LU5: Have regard to the potential for screening vegetation when evaluating proposals for development within the uplands.

14.9 Scenic Routes and Protected Views

The scenic routes and viewpoints designated within the KCDP 2017-2023 are listed within the Table 15-5 of the expired development plan and their descriptions below taken from the plan's Appendix 4 Scenic Routes. None of the hillside views on this KCDP map have been listed or described.

The two scenic routes within the study area worthy of consideration are scenic route no. 12 and 22.

Scenic Route 12:

'Views West of the Kildare Plains from Redbog Area and Views towards Caureen; from Rathmore Cross Roads to Pipershall. Location: Greenmount, Redbog, Pipershall, Rathmore West. The local road that runs through Rathmore provides scenic vistas of the Kildare plains to the southwest and the undulating lands at the County Boundary to the southeast. The elevated nature of the road and the generally low hedgerows and vegetation of the agricultural lands allow long-distance visibility. Although scattered rural housing is located in the area, these are partially screened by existing vegetation. The views available from hedge opening along the road remain unaffected.'

Scenic Route 22:

'Views to the North-West of the open countryside; from Kilteel Village to Rathmore Village. Location: Furryhill, Kilteel Lower, Rathmore East. Open and extensive views of the surrounding lowlands are available to the west, whilst views onto the hilltops are provided to the east. The undulating nature of the lowlands in this part of the county and the existing hedgerows with mature trees add complexity to the vistas, as well as partially screening views along the roads. Although scattered housing is located in the area, the landscape character remains unaffected and, similarly, the views along the road onto the lowlands maintain their scenic value. Although the hilltops to the west limit the extent of the vistas, these remain highly scenic.'

Although Scenic Route 29 is on the fringes of the study area ("Views of Countryside and East Kildare Uplands from Bishopshill Commons") the direction of the protected view is facing eastwards towards the Wicklow mountains, facing away from the site. Thus, it is of no relevance.

Figure 11-8, below, illustrates the location of Scenic Route 12 & 22, in relation to the site.

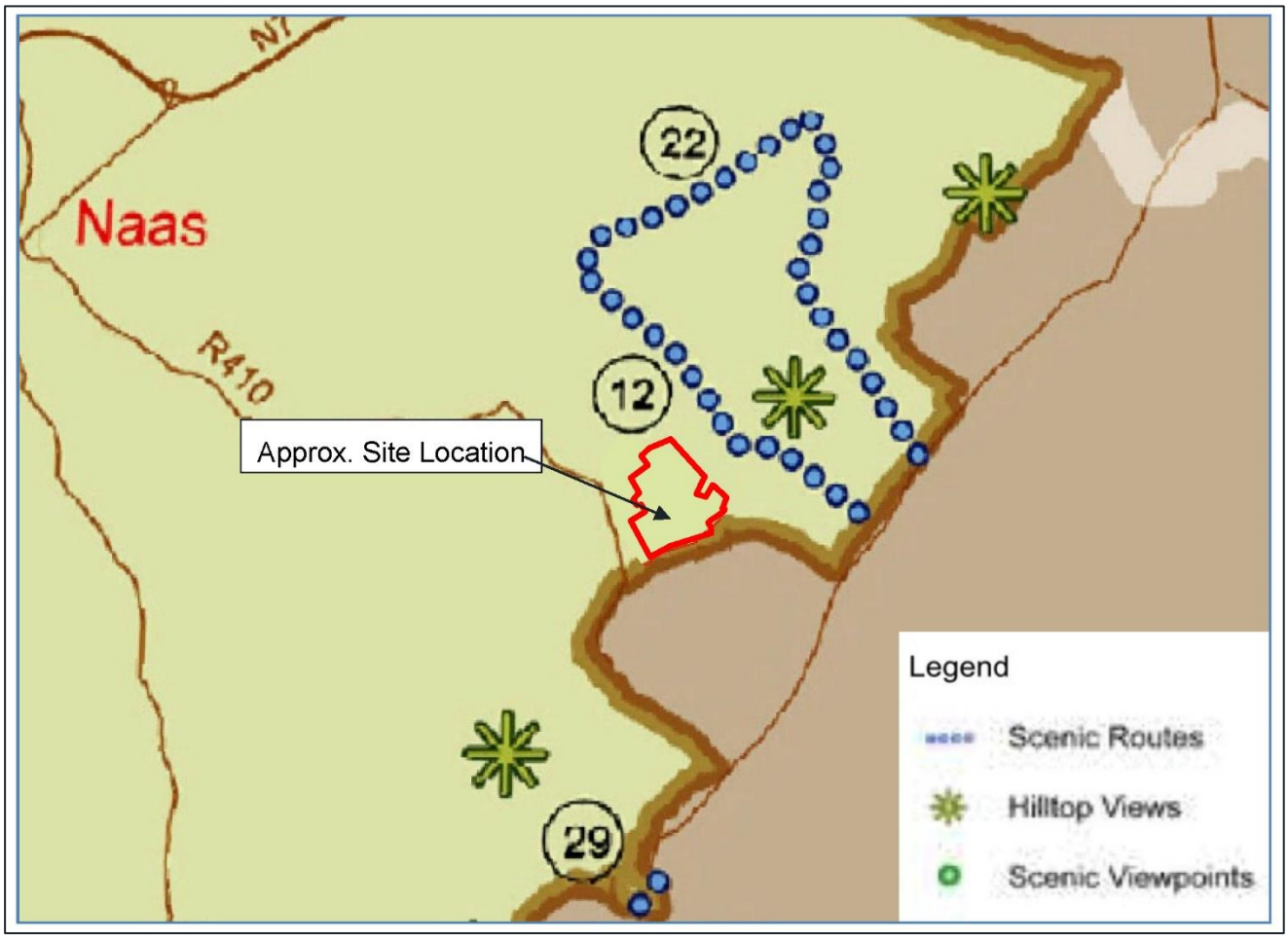


Figure 11-8: Extract of KCDP 2017-2023 Scenic Route and Viewpoints Map 14-2

Scenic Route and Protected Views Policy and Objectives:

SR1: Protect views from designated scenic routes by avoiding any development that could disrupt the vistas or disproportionately impact on the landscape character of the area, thereby affecting the scenic and amenity value of the views.

Objectives – Landscape

LO1: Have regard to the Landscape Sensitivity Factors in the vicinity of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals.

LO4: Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Kildare's built and natural environment.

LO5: Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly upland, river, canal views, views across the Curragh, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty.

LO6: Preserve and protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes identified in this Plan listed in Table 14.5 and identified on Map 14.3.

Extractive Industries:

Chapter 10 of this KCDP set out the policies related to extraction industry of which those with a particular reference to landscape include:

EI 2: Recognise the role and facilitate the exploitation of County Kildare's natural aggregate resources in a manner which does not unduly impinge on the environmental quality and the visual and residential amenity of an area, while continuing to regulate the extraction of aggregates and to seek the delivery of environmental benefits in the form of sustainable habitat creation in conjunction with the restoration phases of development

EI 3: Facilitate the sourcing of aggregates for and the operation of the extractive industry in suitable locations, subject to the protection of landscape, environment, road network, heritage, visual quality and amenity of the area

EI 4: Ensure that extraction activities address key environmental, amenity, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation. In the assessment of planning applications for new development, intensification of use or diversification of activity, the Council will have regard to the nature of the proposal, the scale of activity proposed, the impact on the adjoining road network, the effect on the environment including important groundwater and aquifer sources, natural drainage patterns and surface water systems and the likely effects that any proposed extractive industry may have on the existing landscape and amenities of the county, including public rights of way and walking routes

EI 5: Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:

- *Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).*
- *Special Protection Areas (SPAs).*
- *Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).*
- *Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna.*
- *Zones of Archaeological Potential.*
- *The vicinity of a recorded monument.*
- *Sensitive landscape areas as identified at Chapter 14 of this Plan.*
- *Scenic views and prospects.*
- *Protected Structures.*

- *Established rights of way and walking routes.*

EI 9: Require a detailed landscaping plan to be submitted with all planning applications indicating proposed screening for the operational life of the site. The predominant use of native plant species in the proposed landscaping plan is encouraged

EI 10: Require detailed landscaping and quarry restoration plans to be submitted with each application. Habitats and species surveying shall be carried out and shall influence the restoration plan for the site

EI 12: Ensure that all existing workings are rehabilitated to suitable land-uses and that extraction activities allow for future rehabilitation and proper land-use management

11.2.2.3 Adopted Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The adopted Wicklow CDP has been considered within this section in relation to any protected views or scenic routes that may be of relevance to the site and/or development. Out of the 48 designated "Views of Special Amenity value or Special Interest" listed in Chapter 17 of the CDP, only two of these fall within the study area (i.e. View 33 and View 34). However, neither of these are orientated in the general direction of the Site.

In addition to the above designated views, there are 66 designated "Prospects of Special Amenity value or Special Interest" listed in Chapter 17 of the Wicklow CDP, which take the form of routes along some of the county roads. Of these routes, only Prospect 20 and Prospect 21 (Figure 11-9 below) fall within the study area. However the eastern oriented views are facing away from the Site. Potential for views from Prospect 20: "R758, L8369, L4364 & L4365, Lake Drive from the N81 at Glashina to Oldcourt." is noted as "Prospect of Poulaphouca" as it runs on the eastern side of the lake. However, the Site is located more than 2 km from the Poulaphouca Reservoir.

Figure 11-9: Extract of WCDP 2022-2028 Map 17.11 of those prospects within the study area -

Policy:

CPO 17.38: *To protect listed views and prospects from development that would either obstruct the view / prospect from the identified vantage point or form an obtrusive or incongruous feature in that view / prospect. Due regard will be paid in assessing development applications to the span and scope of the view / prospect and the location of the development within that view / prospect.*

The nearest county landscape designations within the study area are two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which include the Mountain Uplands AONB and Poulaphouca Reservoir AONB. Both of these are more than 2 km from the Site, with potential visibility from both considered within the Visual Impact Assessment of this report.

11.2.2.4 Wicklow County Development Plan 2016-2022 (Expired)

The various “Views of Special Amenity value or Special Interest” and “Prospects of Special Amenity value or Special Interest” noted above in the adopted WCDP are the exacted same as those within the previous WCDP 2016-2022. There has been no change to these protected views and routes, or the wording of their planning policy as previously covered under Policy NH52 within Chapter 10

Heritage of the now expired WCDP. Likewise, the county's designated areas within the study area remain the same for both WCDPs.

11.2.3 RELEVANT GUIDANCE

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (abbreviated to GLVIA 2013) notes that as a cultural resource, the landscape functions as the setting for our day-to-day lives, also providing opportunities for recreational and aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. It contributes to the sense of place experienced by individuals and communities and provides a link to the past as a record of historic socio-economic and environmental conditions. As an environmental resource, the landscape provides habitat for fauna and flora. It receives, stores, conveys, and cleans water, and vegetation in the landscape stores carbon and produces oxygen. As an economic resource, the landscape provides the raw materials and space for the production of food, materials (e.g. timber, aggregates) and energy (e.g. carbon-based fuels, wind, solar), living space and for recreation and tourism activities.

The GLVIA (2013) notes that landscape is not unchanging. Many different pressures have progressively altered familiar landscapes over time and will continue to do so in the future, creating new landscapes. For example, within the receiving environment, the environs of the development have altered over the last thousand years, from wilderness to agriculture and settlement or townscape.

Many of the drivers for change arise from the requirement for development to meet the needs of a growing population and economy. The concept of sustainable development recognises that change must and will occur to meet the needs of the present, but that it should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental forces and values.

The reversibility of change is also described as an important consideration. If change must occur to meet a current need, can it be reversed to return the resource (in this case, the landscape) to its previous state to allow for development or management for future needs.

Climate change is one of the major factors likely to bring about future change in the landscape, and it is accepted to be the most serious long-term threat to the natural environment, as well as economic activity (particularly primary production) and society. The need for climate change mitigation and adaptation, which includes the management of water and more extreme weather and rainfall patterns, is part of this.

11.2.3.1 Key Guidance Documents

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

The methodology for assessment of the landscape and visual effects is informed by the following key guidance documents, namely:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA 2013).
- *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements*. (EPA, 2022)

This guidance is authored by the Landscape Institute in the UK and the IEMA, which contains a network of members in UK and Ireland and internationally. The guidance was prepared within the parameters of relevant EU directives at the time and is updated, where necessary, by Landscape Institute bulletins online. The GLIVA 2013 is used internationally and is the industry standard for LVIA in Ireland.

The EPA guidance (2022) refers to the use of topic specific guidance and specifically references the GLVIA 2013 in relation to professional judgement. It recognises (at para 3.72) that:

"Some uncertainty is unavoidable in EIA, especially about matters that involve an element of judgement, such as assigning a level of significance to an effect. Such judgements should be explicit and substantiated rather than presented as objective fact. This is best done using agreed referable approaches, e.g. the Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impacts Assessment provide guidance on what constitutes a severe visual effect".

References are also made to the *'Landscape and Landscape Assessment – Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' document, published in 2000 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

11.3 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The GLVIA 2013 outlines the assessment process, which combines judgements on the sensitivity of the resource, and the magnitude of the change as a result of the development. These are then combined to reach an assessment of the significance of the effect.

Another key distinction to make is that in the GLVIA methodology, a distinction is made between landscape effects and the visual effects of a development.

'Landscape' results from the interplay between the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create distinctive character of landscape in different places. 'Landscape character assessment' is the method used in LVIA to describe landscape, and by which to understand the potential effects of a development on the landscape as 'a resource'. Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape, but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of landscape that make a place distinctive.

Views and 'visual amenity' refer to the interrelationship between people and the landscape. The GLVIA 2013 prescribes that effects on views and visual amenity should be assessed separately from landscape, although the two topics are inherently linked. Visual assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area's visual amenity.

11.3.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BASELINE

The process set out in the GLVIA 2013 and in the EPA (2022) involves the preparation of the baseline or receiving environment characteristics. This includes two stages, which are a desk-based study and site visit/field study. These allow the assessor to establish the existing receiving environment and key landscape and visual characteristics and their sensitivities.

<u>The desk-based study includes:</u>

- Review of preliminary proposals and identification of preliminary study area
- Review of the history of the site including past activity and planning applications

- Review of the current and recent expired Development Plan(s) within the study area, and any other plans as appropriate, to identify relevant national and local designations and polices.
- This may include designations such as scenic routes, protected views and other landscape designations including any Landscape Character Assessments International designations such as UNESCO designations would also be relevant here, if present.
- Other information that may be consulted include aerial imagery, OSI Discovery series mapping, historic (6-inch and 25 inch) mapping and CORINE Landcover Maps (2018).

A site visit was then carried out to review and/or confirm the findings of the desk-based study and provide a more detailed description of the landscape and visual character of the study area. Based on both the desk study and site visit, the assessor identifies landscape and visual receptors and their relative sensitivity. The site visit was carried out in November 2023.

11.3.2 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS:

Once the baseline is established, and the development drawings and descriptions reviewed, the assessment process is commenced, as outlined in Section 11.3.3-11.3.4.

Use of 'Impact and 'Effect

Section 1.16 of the GLVIA (referring to the EIA Directive), advises that the terms 'impact' and 'effect' should be clearly distinguished and consistently used in the preparation of an LVIA.

'Impact' is defined as the action being taken. In the case of the development, the impact would include the extraction of gravel and sand and the associated activities related to the onsite processing of this extracted material. As this is assessment is for a rEIAR such impacts will need to be considered retrospectively.

'Effect' is defined as the change or changes resulting from those actions, e.g. a change in landscape character, or changes to the composition, character and quality of views in the receiving environment. This report focusses on these effects.

11.3.3 METHODOLOGY FOR LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

In Section 11.7.1 of this report, the landscape effects of the development since 2020 to the present are assessed. The nature and scale of changes to the landscape elements and characteristics are identified, and the consequential effect on landscape character and value are discussed. Trends of change in the landscape are taken into account. The assessment of the significance of the effects takes account of the sensitivity of the landscape resource and the magnitude of change to the landscape, which resulted from the development.

Definitions and descriptions of sensitivity, magnitude of change and quality and longevity of effects are derived from the GLVIA 2013. The GLVIA 2013 does not set out specific definitions of descriptions used but contains widely used principles and case studies / examples that are intended to inform a professional's methodology, supported by their experience and judgements in relation to landscape and landscape change. These descriptions expand and complement the EPA guidelines as intended, in relation to topic-specific guidance.

Sensitivity of the Landscape Resource

Sensitivity is a combination of Landscape Value and Landscape Sensitivity:

- Landscape values can be identified by the presence of landscape designations or policies, which indicate particular values, either on a national or local level. In addition, a number of criteria are used to assess the value of a landscape.

- Landscape susceptibility is defined in the GLVIA as, "*the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline scenario and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.*" Susceptibility is a function of its land use, landscape patterns and scale, visual enclosure and distribution of visual receptors, scope for mitigation, and the value placed on the landscape. Susceptibility also relates to the type of development – a landscape may be highly susceptible to certain types of development but have a low susceptibility to other types of development.

It includes consideration of landscape values as well as the susceptibility of the landscape to change.

With regard to landscape effects, a development has the potential to improve the environment as well as damage it. In certain situations, there might be policy encouraging a type of change in the landscape, and a particular development may achieve this.

Landscape Sensitivity ranges from Low to Very High as outlined in Table 11-1**.**

Table 11-1 – Categories of Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape exhibits a very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness and harmony. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change in the form of development is very low. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national or international value and the principal management objective for the area is protection of the existing character from change
High	Areas where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that it has limited/low capacity for accommodating change in the form of development. These attributes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national, regional or county value and the principal management objective for the area is conservation of the existing character.
Medium	Areas where the landscape has certain valued elements, features or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong. The character of the landscape is such that there is some capacity for change in the form of development. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change
Low	Areas where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character of the landscape is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and where the principal management objective is to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration or enhancement.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands or extraction sites, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principal management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair or restoration.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of change is a factor of the scale, extent and degree of change imposed on the landscape with reference to its key elements, features and characteristics (also known as 'landscape receptors'). Five categories are used to classify magnitude of landscape change.

For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify the landscape sensitivity of the receiving environment, from Very High sensitivity to Negligible. (These categories are defined in Table 11-2, below):

Table 11-2 – Magnitude of Landscape Change

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change in the character of the landscape.
High	Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in alteration or compromise to key elements, features or characteristics, and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in a moderate to large change to the character of the landscape.
Medium	Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in moderate change to the character of the landscape.
Low	Change that is limited in extent, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape
Negligible	Change that is very limited in extent, resulting in no alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context. Such development results in minimal change to the character of the landscape.

11.3.4 METHODOLOGY FOR VISUAL ASSESSMENT

In Section 11.7.2*Visual Effects* of this report, the visual effects of the development are assessed. Visual assessment considers the sensitivity of the viewers (i.e. groups of people) and the magnitude of the changes to the composition and character of views. The assessment is made for a number of viewpoints selected to represent the range of visual receptors in the receiving environment. The significance of the visual effects experienced at these locations is assessed by measuring the visual receptor sensitivity against the magnitude of change to the view resulting from the development.

Sensitivity of the Visual Receptor

Visual receptor sensitivity is a function of two main considerations:

- Susceptibility of the visual receptor to change. This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention or interest is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location.

Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. Trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience.

Visual receptors less susceptible to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes which would be more susceptible), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.

- Value attached to the view. This depends to a large extent on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts).

For the purpose of assessment, five categories are used to classify visual receptor sensitivity. These categories range from Very High to Negligible and are described in Table 11-3.

Table 11-3 – Categories of Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Viewers at iconic viewpoints - towards or from a landscape feature or area - that are recognised in policy or otherwise regarded as being of very high value or national value. This may also include residential viewers whose primary view is of very high value.
High	Viewers at viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of high value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or outdoor recreation features) and are valued by the local community. This would include tourist attractions, and heritage features of regional or county value, and viewers travelling on scenic routes.
Medium	Viewers at viewpoints representing people travelling at slow or moderate speed through or past the affected landscape in cars or on public transport, where they are partly but not entirely focused on the landscape, or where the landscape has some valued views. The views are generally not designated, but which include panoramic views or views judged to be of some scenic quality, which demonstrate some sense of naturalness, tranquillity, or some rare element in the view.
Low	Viewers at viewpoints reflecting people involved in activities not focused on the landscape e.g. people at their place of work or engaged in similar activities such as shopping, etc. The view may present an attractive backdrop to these activities but there is no evidence that the view is valued, or that it is regarded as an important element of these activities. Viewers travelling at high speeds (e.g. motorways) may also be considered of low susceptibility.
Negligible	Viewpoints reflecting people involved in activities not focused on the landscape e.g. people at their place of work or engaged in similar activities, such as shopping, where the view has no relevance or is of poor quality and not valued.

Magnitude of Change to the view

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of the development into the view, relative to the other elements and features in the composition (i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full

view, partial or peripheral, or glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, the duration and the reversibility of the visual effects.

Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view. These range from Very High to Negligible and are defined in Table 11-4:

Table 11-4 – Magnitude of Visual Change

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs highly valued features or characteristics, or the introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.
High	Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.
Medium	Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity.
Low	Minor intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change to visual amenity.
Negligible	Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

In this case, a number of tools are used to assist in the assessment of visual effects. These include selecting the same 13 no. viewpoint locations as those previously selected for the 2020 proposed extension planning application. This is to allow a direct comparison of those views captured for the past application, as recorded in its visual figures, against the views recorded during this report's site visit to determine the likely visual changes that has occurred to these views between these two time periods.

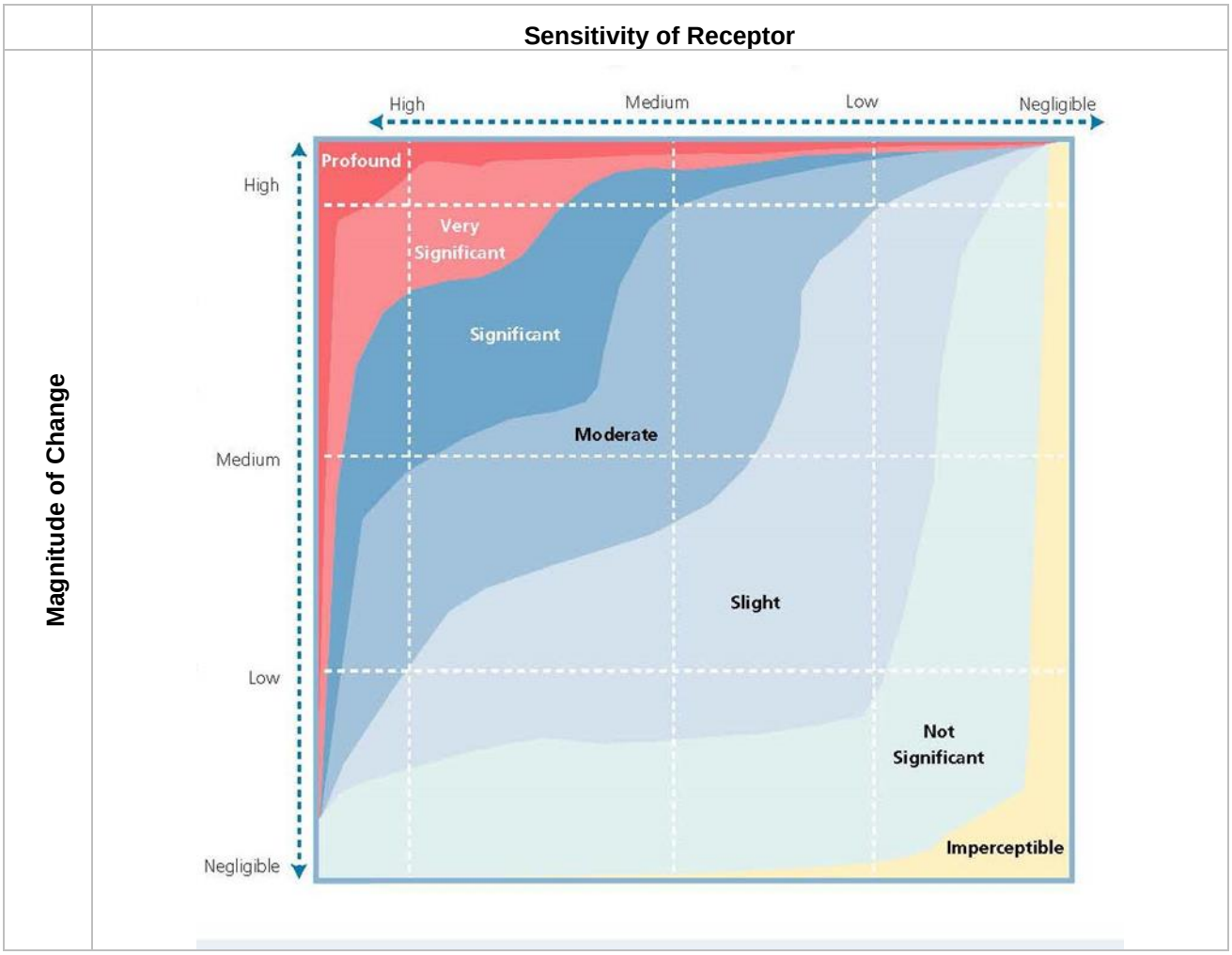
Significance of Effects

In order to classify the significance of landscape and visual effects, the predicted magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape/viewpoint. The definitions used by the EPA (2022) provide a useful scale to describe the significance of the effects.

There are seven classifications of significance, namely: (1) imperceptible, (2) not significant, (3) slight, (4) moderate, (5) significant, (6) very significant, (7) profound.

The relationship between the magnitude of change and sensitivity of the receptor with the varying classifications of Significance is illustrated on the below extract from the EPA (2022) Guidelines (with labels amended and simplified based on GLVIA (2013 guidance), in Table 11-5 below.:

Table 11-5 – Significance of Effect (Source: EPA 2022)



Note: This graphic is a guideline only, and an element of professional judgment is also applied. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise, experience and common sense, to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

The GLVIA 3rd Edition recognises (at para 2.23) that:

"*professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements.*"

Quality and Timescale

In accordance with the EPA (2022), the predicted impacts are also classified as beneficial, neutral, or adverse.

This is not an absolute exercise; in particular, visual receptors' attitudes to development, and thus their response to the impact of a proposed development, will vary. However, the methodology applied

is designed to provide robust justification for the conclusions drawn. These qualitative definitions are included in Table 11-6*.*

Table 11-6 – Quality of Effect (Source CSR based on GLVIA 2013)

Definition of quality of effects	
Adverse/negative	Scheme at variance with landform, scale, pattern. Would degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of valued features, elements or their setting or cause the quality of the landscape (townscape) view to be diminished;
Neutral	Scheme complements (or does not detract from) the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape (townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality;
Beneficial /positive	Improves landscape (townscape)/view quality and character, fits with the scale, landform and pattern and enables the restoration of valued characteristic features or repairs / removes damage caused by existing land uses.

Impacts/effects are also categorised according to their longevity or timescale as in Table 11-7, below:

Table 11-7 – Duration of Effect (Source: EPA 2022)

Definition of duration of effects	
Duration	**Description**
Temporary	Effects lasting one year or less
Short Term	Effects lasting one to seven years
Medium Term	Effects lasting seven to fifteen years
Long Term	Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years
Permanent	Effects lasting over sixty years

11.4 BASELINE AND SUBSEQUENT CONDITIONS (September 2020 to present)

11.4.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscape character is described in terms of landform (topography and drainage), landcover (vegetation, built form, natural and cultural heritage) and Transport & Settlement Pattern. The Site (i.e. the rEIAR project boundary) and immediate surrounds are described separately from the wider landscape.

11.4.1.1 Landform- Topography and drainage

Site and immediate vicinity

The existing landform within the quarry consists of large ridgeline near the southern site boundary which sharply drops down to the quarry floor. This area is divided up by elevated internal roadways with the lower heavily worked lands on either side of the road. There are some small ridges within this space and platforms cut into their steep slopes to allow working out of these outcrops (Figure 11-10, below). Three small water bodies have formed where the area of extraction has fallen below the existing ground water table level.

The quarry's terrain varies from a high point of approximately 270 mAOD by the rock face marking its southern boundary to the lowest point of approximately 188 mAOD found on the quarry floor. Here the quarry floor has been lowered by approximately 12 m from an average elevation of approximately 200 mAOD in 2020, with the continued extraction in the intervening timeframe. The topography of the surrounding pasture lands gradually rises to the northeastern and eastern boundary edge. This land level ranges between approximately 209 m to 260 mAOD from the northeast to eastern corners of the Site. A small waterbody sits within this area of farmland directly north of the quarry's boundary edge (Figure 11-11 below).

Figure 11-10: Internal views of the existing quarry's worked out land (a) looking southwest towards the southern boundary by thewoodlands at Deerpark and (b) looking west towards the homes and farmsteads off the R410 road.

Figure 11-11: View of small waterbody within the site located just north of the existing quarry limits.

The landform described above has changed little since 2020, by which time the quarry's key excavation areas had already been established. The only discernible topographical changes between September 2020 and the present day are some localised lowering of the quarry floor levels and working of the previously cleared adjoining outcrops along the western and southwest end of the quarry. However, there are no alternations of the Site's topography around the quarry boundary edges or its adjoining pasture lands. Similarly, the water bodies are largely the same, except that the western body is now divided in two by a more defined access road, resulting in some fluctuations in water levels.

Wider Area

The landform found throughout the study area is distinguished by two distinctive characters, which result in the 'sense of place' being considerably different as one moves from west to east, and north to south. This is largely due to the distinct hill range running northeast-southwest through the study area, rising from 281 mAOD in the southwest at Carrigeen, to 379 mAOD at Cupidstown, in the northeast, which principally separates County Wicklow (i.e. east of the range) from County Kildare (i.e. west of the range). West of the range, land undulates between 100 and 200 mAOD, and is relatively mild in terrain, punctuated by a handful of small streams. East of the range, in County Wicklow, landform is more dramatic, varied and picturesque. The lower slopes of the Wicklow Mountains lie in the south and southeast of the study area (Figure 11-12), with the "Blessington Lakes" (i.e. Poulaphouca Reservoir) occupying the large basin in between the mountains and the

aforementioned hill range (Figure 11-13). The River Liffey feeds into the reservoir in the far east of the study area.

Figure 11-12: The Wicklow Mountains, as seen in the distance, are in the south and southeast of the study area

Figure 11-13: Poulaphouca Reservoir with the aforementioned hill range in the distance, which runs northeast- southwest through the study area

Overall, there has been no notable changes to the topography across the wider study area, between September 2020 and the present, with only some localised changes occurring within the neighbouring quarries as extraction has continued overtime. However, all such extractive works are contained within the same quarries site boundaries as that of 2020.

11.4.1.2 Landcover – Built Form, Vegetation and Cultural Heritage

Land use

Site and immediate vicinity

The land use within the Site consists of the operating quarry and adjoining pasture (see Figure 11-14). Farmland within the Site contains approximately ten small to medium scale fields bounded by hedgerows of mature individual hawthorns, among other low-tree species. The Site is also bounded on its south by the northeastern edges by farmland (identified in the background of Figure 11-14) and that of Deerpark, a public, mixed deciduous and conifer woodland. Contained within the worked lands of the quarry are supporting ancillary structures, including offices, welfare facilities, processing plant machinery and temporary stockpiles, the plant machinery workshop and parking (see Figure 11-15).

Figure 11-14: Current extraction activity occurring at the northwest end of the existing quarry

In terms of protected recorded protected structures (RPS), national recorded monuments and places (RMP) or non-protected National Inventory of Architectural Interests (NIAI) buildings and structures, there are none such within the site, nor any other cultural heritage assets found within the Site limits or its immediate surroundings. The overall landcover characteristic of the Site as containing a working quarry and some agricultural lands has remained the same from 2020 to the present day, as the quarry has been contained within the same overall area with no alternations to its area of pastureland. Similarly, the main buildings and structures of the quarry have remained in the same location since 2020, with only minor temporary variations in the siting of some plant machinery, movable processing plant and stockpiles within the quarry floor, which are reflective of the current extraction activity occurring within the quarry.

Figure 11-15: Current temporary stockpiling off of the extracted material next to the processing plant in southeastern end of the quarry

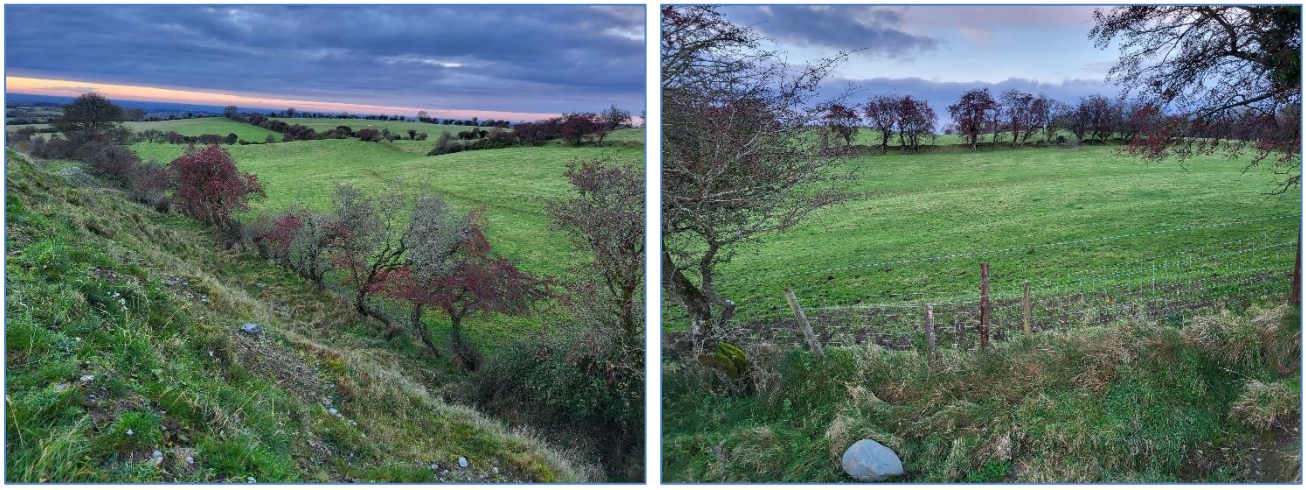


Figure 11-16: The existing field hedgerows, as viewed from the northern edges of the existing quarry limits.

Wider Area

The immediate lands next to the Site include other existing operational quarries to the south and east, which align the Kildare and Wicklow county border. The nearest of these is Hudson Wicklow quarry, from which the Site is accessed, which is also located off the N81. This collection of quarries, including the Site, extends across an area of land covering approximately 2 km (northwest-southeast) by approximately 1.4 km (northeast-southwest), in places. The elevated and/or hilltop location of these quarries results in them being visible from several local receptors (Figure 11-17). Another nearby former quarry is located on the opposite/easter side of the N81, within the northern end of Blessington town. Other quarries within the wider extent of the study area include approximately 2.3 km east of the Site at Hempstown Commons and approximately 3.6 km west of the Site at Walshestown.

Figure 11-17: Overview of hill range (in distance) along which opencast quarries are evident for over 3 km

Other land uses across the County Kildare and Wicklow sections of the study area are overwhelmingly pastoral in nature, with medium-large sized fields with mature field boundaries (Figure 11-18). Some small conifer plantations and deciduous woods are scattered through this farmland. The largest mixed woods are found next to the Site at Deerpark and along the southwestern end of the study area by the Poulaphouca Reservoir. The various small settlements/villages and town of Blessington found within the study area are mostly of residential use, although there are also some retail/commercial/educational uses, along with the above-mentioned quarries within the town limits. The large Poulaphouca reservoir on the edge of Blessington serves as a rich natural habitat designated as a SPA and pNHA and provides various recreational activities and a public water resource.

There are various cultural heritage assets found across the wider study area reflecting its rich historic past. Many of those assets found across the rural lands are RMPs (Record of Monuments and Places), which consist of the likes of enclosures or burials, and are typically located on higher lands. RPS built structures are also found within the centre of the settlements of Blessington, Easdestown and Rathmore and include the likes of churches, houses and other public buildings. However, some other non-protected historic buildings within these settlements are listed within the NIAI.

Figure 11-18: View from lower slopes of the Wicklow Mountains, in the south and southeast of the study area

Likewise, the landcover characteristic found across the extent of the wider study area has largely remained the same since 2020 to the present day.

11.4.1.3 Transport and settlement pattern

The regional R410 road is located within 400 m to the west of the Site and the N81 National Road is located approximately 1.5 km to the southeast. This national secondary road connecting Tullow, Co. Carlow, with the M50, is the primary transport corridor within the study area and runs through the centre of Blessington town. There are some regional roads leading off the N81, but most roads within the study area are local/minor roads serving the rural hinterland.

The Site is located directly north of the town boundary of Blessington. This northern end of the town boundary includes the adjoining quarries and woodlands, with the town centre of Blessington located approximately 2.14 km northwest of the Site's southern boundary edge.

Wider Area

The nearest settlements to the Site within County Kildare include the small villages of Eadestown (approx. 2 km northwest of the Site) and Rathmore (approximately 2.7 km north of the Site). Across the various regional and local networks are individual and clusters of rural dwellings, of which there are 25 rural 'one off' dwellings found within 500 m west, northwest, north and northeast of the Site. The relatively high density of these settlements and clustering of rural residences is reflective of the area's popularity due to its well-renowned natural beauty and proximity to the city of Dublin.

As with the other key landscape characteristics, the transport network and settlement pattern across the study area have largely remained the same from 2020 to the present day.

11.4.2 LANDSCAPE VALUE

The landscape values of a site can be identified through formal designations which infer landscape value, as well as values which are not enshrined in policy but are evident on the site. These values are listed below and can be further categorised in two ways: values which should be conserved, and values that provide opportunity for enhancement. However, in addition to formal designations at international, nation and local level, the GLVIA 2013 recommend the use of a number of criteria which can help to describe landscape values. These include:

Landscape Quality/Condition

- Heritage/Conservation interests
- Scenic Quality
- Rarity
- Perceptual aspects
- Recreation Value

Conservation values

The conservation values indicate those aspects of the receiving environment which are sensitive and could be negatively impacted on by the development. These values form the potential landscape and visual constraints to the development. These include:

- Rural characteristics of the section of fields that make up part of the Site.
- Conserving trees/treelines and hedgerows across field boundaries of the site and the adjoining woodland.
- The small water bodies and tree/bush lined ridgelines.
- Scenic or picturesque views experienced from the surrounding area which include some designated views and include views towards the Wicklow Hills and Poulaphouca Reservoir.

Enhancement Values

The enhancement values reflect change that is occurring in the landscape and its inherent robustness and identify elements which could be enhanced. These could relate to achieving socio-economic benefits. These include:

- Area of intensive quarrying active within part of the Site and surrounding lands
- Weak field hedgerows boundaries and large parts of land of low ecological value
- Proximity to settlement of Blessington and future pressure for its continued growth

11.5 SELECTION OF SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

11.5.1 VISUAL RECEPTORS

Visual receptors, as outlined in the visual methodology section, can range from High to Negligible sensitivity. More sensitive visual receptors include those involved in recreation, or at amenity areas where there is a focus on a scenic landscape, or residents with views of scenic quality. Less sensitive receptors would include those driving at higher speeds or those engaged in activities where there is not a focus on the landscape and where the views are not considered of high quality.

The desktop study review of the previous 2020 application identifies a total of 13 no. viewpoints had been selected for assessment in its LVIA, which had considered a range of views including those from nearby residential properties, elevated sections of road and designated county Kildare/Wicklow scenic

routes and views within the study area. These viewpoints were revisited during the field study in November 2023 and reviewed for their suitability for use in this visual assessment, i.e. to determine if any views had become obscured by vegetation or structures since 2020. All 13 no. viewpoints were found suitable with no adjustments needed to their orientation or location. The site visits also allowed the assessor to consider the likely visual changes that may have occurred within each view since they were first assessed in 2020 and then in 2023. This is a robust selection of viewpoints.

Viewpoints

The selected viewpoints are listed in Table 11-8 and mapped in Figure 11-19 below. The potential impact of the development upon these receptors existing views between 2020 and 2023 are assessed in the visual assessment section.

Table 11-8 – Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint Number	Viewpoint Description	Distance and Direction from site boundary
1	Elevated local road at Kilbride townland	4.07 km E
2	Designated Wicklow County “Prospect” overlooking Poulaphouca Reservoir	4.19 km SE
3	Designated Wicklow County “Prospect” at Baltyboys along the R758	4.35 km S
4	Ring road along northern periphery of Blessington Town	1.67 km S
5	Elevated third class road southwest of site, at Newtownpark townland	1.18 km SW
6	R410 west of site, at Athgarrett townland	270 m NW
7	R410 northwest of site near Carter’s Hill	1.19 km NW
8	Third class road at Baysland townland	3.75 km NW
9	County Kildare scenic route, near Kilteel village	3.74 km NE
10	Dead-end third class road east/north-east of site	60 m E
11	County Kildare scenic route, at Greenmount townland	700 m NE
12	Residences along the R410, southwest of site	280 m SE
13	Residences along short cul de sac at Wolfestone townland	5 m W

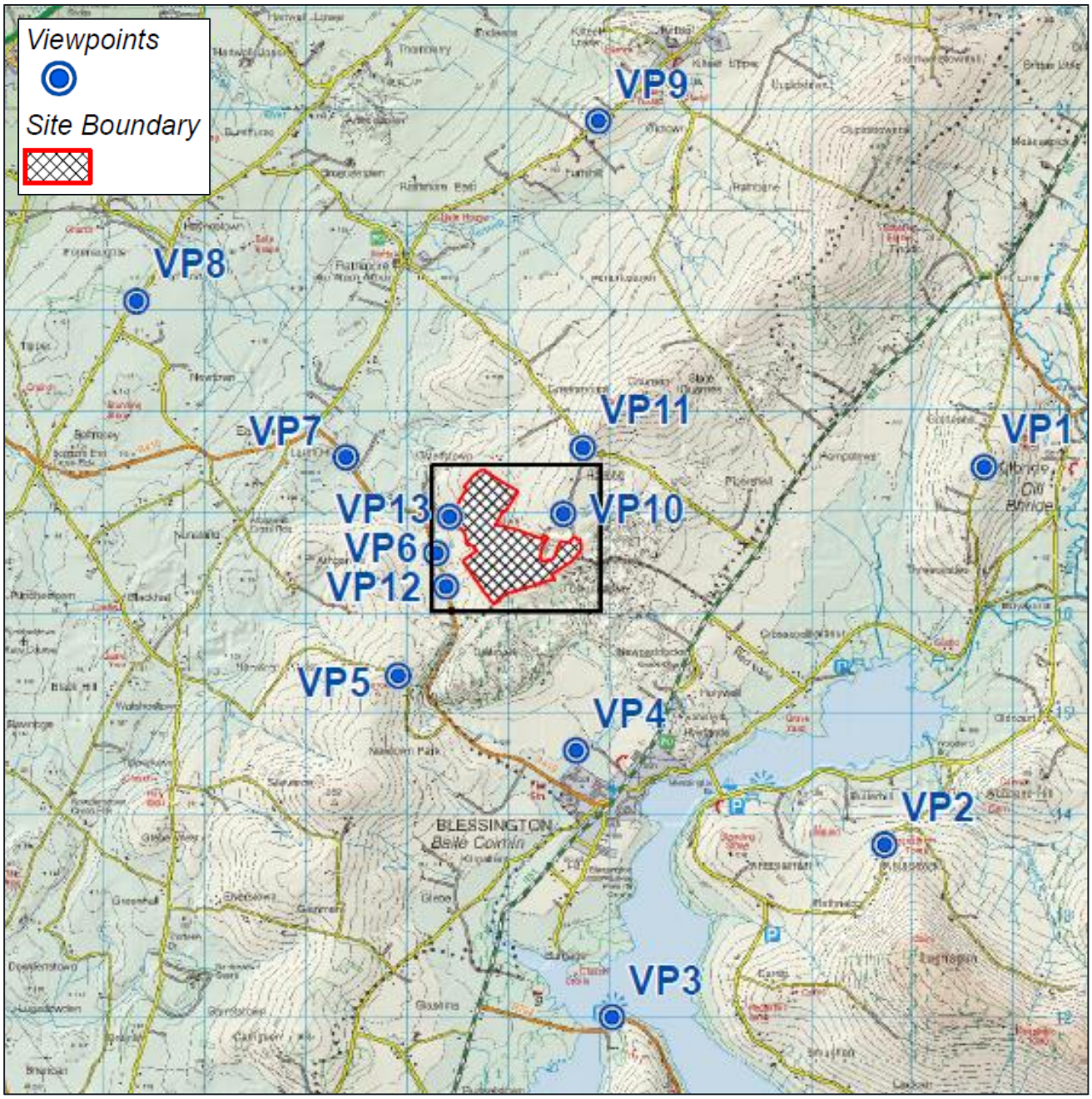


Figure 11-19: Viewpoint Location Map

11.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Development which has occurred

The lands subject of this rEIAR extend to ca. 95.8 hectares and covers all lands within the EIA project boundary line as indicated in Figure 11-2 and are referred to as the 'Site' within this assessment. These lands are a mix of pastureland and the existing quarry. The quarry area that makes up the application for substitute consent planning unit and currently extends to ca. 71.9 hectares. It is accessed from a laneway off the neighbouring Hudson Wicklow quarry which leads to the N81 road

to the south. The area of farmland is accessed from other adjoining fields and laneway from off the R410 road to the west and north of the Site.

The baseline quarry in 2020 consists of already worked/quarried lands previously granted permission in 2007 under planning reg. ref. 07/0267. The quarried area at this stage has been determined to extend to approximately 37.3 ha and depth of approximately 200 mAOD in the central excavation area.

Other key elements within the quarry include an office, processing plant, machinery repair and storage of machinery and stockpile around the processing plant which were all contained within the eastern end of the Site near to its entrance. Between 2020 and the present, the quarry activity has continued, which included blasting and mechanical extraction, crushing, washing and grading of extracted material all contained within its limits along with transportation of goods and personnel to/from the quarry.

By 2023 the quarry had been expanded further vertically downwards by approximately 12 m, with a relatively minor extension (i.e. approximately 1.5 ha) in the northwest area of the main pit . The setup of main buildings and processing plant within the southeast of the quarry remain in the same location from 2020 to 2023. Some localised temporary movement of machinery, processing plants and storage containers around the quarry have occurred since 2020 to accommodate the necessary working out of the outcrop and extraction of material over the intervening period. The following aerial imagery (Figure 11-20 to Figure 11-23) help illustrate the evolution of the Site between March 2020 and October 2023. While there has been the aforementioned, relatively minor extension in the northwest of the main pit, the main internal changes occur in relation to the previously worked quarry faces. While this has resulted in the further lowering of the quarry floor, such level changes are not necessarily easy to decipher from aerial image.

Figure 11-20: Aerial View - Source: HBL Aerial – Google Earth - Date: March 2020 (left aerial) and Jun 2019 (right aerial).

Figure 11-21: Aerial View – Source: HBL Aerial – Google Earth – Date: June 2020.

Figure 11-22: Aerial View March 2022 – Source: HBL Aerial – Google Earth.

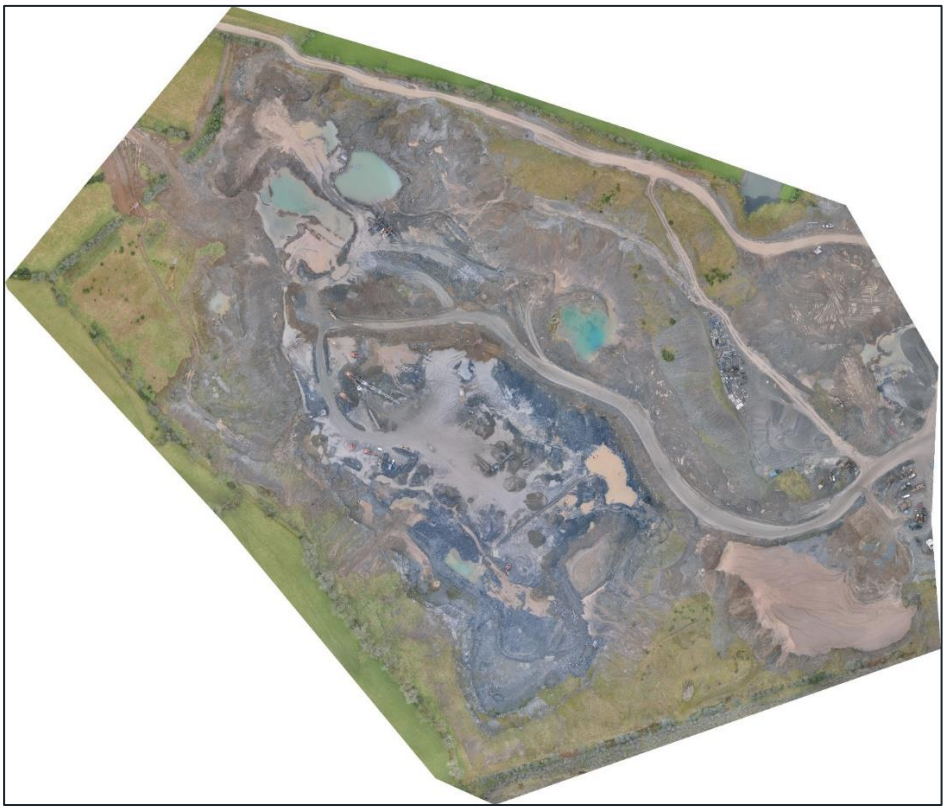


Figure 11-23: Aerial View January 2023. Source: HBL Aerial. Google Earth.

Figure 11-24: Aerial View October 2023 (drone footaage). Source: ESRI World Imagery

11.7 POTENTIAL EFFECTS

11.7.1 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

11.7.1.1 Landscape Sensitivity

Wider Landscape

The areas of higher sloping lands and hills of the Eastern Uplands LCA, which are designated by KCC as a High Amenity Area, are noted as having a 'High sensitivity.' This is defined by the council in the KCDP as:

"Areas with reduced capacity to accommodate uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regard to prevalent sensitivity factors."

This 'High Sensitivity' is due, in part, to the profiles of these hillsides being viewed alongside the Wicklow Hills against the skyline from the lowland plains that cover much of the county and provided elevated views of the county, as well as towards the Wicklow hills and Poulaphouca Reservoir. The Landscape character assessment also considered the compatibility of the Eastern Uplands as having 'medium compatibility' for sand and gravel extraction.

Thus, the wider landscape is deemed to be of a '**High Sensitivity.**'

Application Site and Immediate Vicinity

The site of the development consists of an active quarry with some pastoral fields to the north, with the pastureland in the southwest being located on or close to a ridgeline. It is worth noting that the site is within 300 m of a ridgeline, mixed forestry and "agricultural land with natural vegetation." Thus, the compatibility of sand and gravel extraction is "very unlikely to be compatible" (i.e. '0' rating) if located within 300 m of a ridgeline; "compatible only in certain circumstances" (i.e. '2' rating) if located within 300 m of mixed forestry and is "likely to be compatible with great care" (i.e. '3' rating) if located within 300 m of "agricultural land with natural vegetation."

The Site's existing quarry and the neighbouring operational quarries within county Kildare and Wicklow are of 'Low sensitivity.' The surrounding pastureland and field boundaries within the site and the surrounding rural landscape is of a 'Medium sensitivity.'

Thus, overall, the landscape of the site and immediate vicinity is deemed to be of '**Medium-low.**'

11.7.1.2 Effects which have occurred since September 2020 – Wider Landscape

The effects of the extraction activity that has occurred within the site since 2020 is contained within a very limited geographic area. The further lowering of the quarry floor and resulting processing and removing of the worked material off site is not dissimilar to the level /type of activity that has occurred across these lands as part of the previously approved development of the 2007 application.

The Magnitude of change is deemed to be **Negligible**. In accordance with Table 11-2, this is defined as:

'Change that is very limited in extent, resulting in no alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context. Such development results in minimal change to the character of the landscape.'

In terms of significance, this effect would be **Not Significant.** In terms of duration, this effect would be **Short Term.**

Qualitatively, this change would be **Neutral**. In accordance with Table 11-6, this is defined as:

'Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality.'

Therefore, no significant effects have occurred since September 2020 to the wider landscape.

11.7.1.3 Effects which have occurred since September 2020 – Site and Immediate Vicinity

The effects upon the landscape fabric of the additional extraction activity that has occurred within the site since September 2020 is as similarly limited as the wider landscape. These works have not impacted on the existing field hedgerow boundaries and pastureland use of the site, as evident in the local aerial imagery data for the preceding years (Figure 11-20 to Figure 11-24).

The only notable changes to have occurred are within the quarry, since September 2020, have been the alternation of the site levels because of continued extraction; some indirect alterations to the manmade water bodies from fluctuating ground water/surface water levels, as well as a relatively minor extension (i.e. approximately 1.5 ha) in the northwest area of the main pit. The changes across this part of the quarry are evidenced in varying degrees by the local aerial imagery (Figure 11-20 to Figure 11-24). Indirect changes within the immediate landscape include the continued movement of the vehicles to/from the quarry as the finished processed material is removed off site. This movement has continued since September 2020 collectively with the other adjoining quarries.

The magnitude of change is deemed to be **'Low**.' In accordance with Table 11-2, this is defined as:

'Change that is limited in extent, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape.'

The significance of this change is **Moderate-Slight** and **Short Term.**

Qualitatively, this change would be **Neutral.** In accordance with Table 11-6, this is defined as:

'Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality.'

Therefore, no significant effects have occurred since September 2020 to the Site and Immediate Vicinity.

11.7.1.4 Effects which are occurring

Extraction of resources within the quarry, as well as activity at the processing plant and maintenance area are continuing to date, with the gradual working out of the rock face, further lowering the quarry floor. This is resulting in no additional effects on the wider landscape and the site and immediate environment than those noted in Section 11.7.1.2 and 11.7.1.3 Therefore, no significant landscape effects are occurring.

11.7.2 VISUAL EFFECTS

11.7.2.1 Effects which have occurred

Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Visual receptors of medium to high sensitivity include those at locations of scenic viewpoints (Viewpoints 2, 3, 9 and 11), rural residences and those travelling through the rural area.

11.7.2.2 Viewpoint Assessment

The viewpoints to be assessed in this section are listed and mapped on Table 11-8 and Figure 11-19 above. These viewpoints are the same as those selected for the LVIA assessment of the 2020 application, which will assist in the consistency of approach for this visual assessment.

The following visual assessment involves a comparison between the baseline photography in late 2019 with that of late 2023, for all 13 no. viewpoints (i.e. the same 13 no. viewpoints from the 2020 application, with the same location and orientation). This will allow the assessment to undertake a direct comparison of any visual changes during those years, using photographic evidence.

The baseline photography used to assess the below 13 viewpoints can be found in the attached Appendix 11A of this rEIAR. These figures show panoramic views from each viewpoint looking towards the Site, as captured in October 2019 and 2023, side by side, to allow for direct comparison.

Of particular interest is whether there have been any changes in the intervening landscape e.g. vegetation growth or removal, that may have impacted upon the viewpoint receptor's potential visibility of the existing quarry activity which has occurred within the Site since 2020 to the present. For some receptors, it may be the case that their view towards the Site has not discernibly changed over the last few years and that the Site remains not visible from the viewpoint, as previously determined in the 2020 application.

Viewpoint 1 - Elevated local road at Kilbride townland

Existing View

The view is located along a third-class road which is aligned along the top of a local hill that rises to just over 280 mAOD and which contains groups of rural residences. Outward views are contained by the roadside embankment and low scrub vegetation, although there are breaks across to the surrounding hillside which the Site is located along. The foreground view includes a pasture field enclosed by wire fencing alongside the road. Beyond the field the land drops down for over 1 km before rising to form distant hills in the background. Set within these hills amongst pastures and conifer plantations are large areas of partially visible open cast quarrying. However, the partially visible quarry's workings do not belong to the Site or its immediate vicinity, as the site is hidden from view by the intervening ridgeline.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this location, in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low** as representative of local community views

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry are visible from this point due to screening by the ridgeline and presence of vegetation along it. Thus, the development has had no potential for visual impact or effect on the existing view within the preceding time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the effect is **N/A** (i.e. Not Applicable).

Viewpoint 2 - Designated Wicklow County "Prospect" overlooking Poulaphouca Reservoir

Existing View

This viewpoint is from a local road that is designated as 'Prospect 20' scenic route in the Wicklow County Council. This location unveils picturesque views of its listed features (i.e. designated views) that is the Poulaphouca Reservoir/Blessington Lakes. However, the development is set back more than 2 km from the Poulaphouca Reservoir. In this view, the low hillscape on which the Site is set, appears as a low sweeping horizon above the lakes/reservoir. At over 4 km distance, little detail can be determined about land use upon the hillscape, aside from clumps of pasture and woodland/forestry. An irregular, soil-coloured area along the distant hillscape infers the presence of open cast quarrying. However, the Site's existing quarry is hidden from view by the intervening landform and vegetation.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this location, in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium**, as representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry extents are visible from this location, due to screening by the ridgeline and presence of vegetation along it. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change i**n the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect is **N/A**.

Viewpoint 3 - Designated Wicklow County "Prospect" at Baltyboys along the R758

Existing View

The viewpoint is located further along the same Wicklow County Council designated scenic route 'Prospect 20'. Similarly, this scenic view primarily unveils picturesque views of its listed features (i.e. designated views) that is the Poulaphouca Reservoir/Blessington Lakes. However, the development is set back more than 2 km from the Poulaphouca Reservoir. Across the lake/reservoir, an abundance of tall deciduous woodland tends to block most views, including that of Blessington town. Upon the skyline above these lakeside trees, the mature trees within the hilltop Deerpark woodland can be made out. This hill's ridgeline and the lines of trees help to prevent the Site's existing quarry being visible from this point.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this location, in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium**, as the view is representative of local community views and major routes.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry extents are visible from this point, due to screening by the ridgeline and presence of vegetation along it. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the effect is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 4 - Ring road along northern periphery of Blessington Town

Existing View

The viewpoint is located along a ring road on the northern periphery of Blessington town. This area of the town has experienced considerable expansion, construction and settlement in the last 20 years, and is characterised by several relatively recent housing developments, with further expansion of housing anticipated in this area. This location offers the clearest potential for views in the direction of the Site. The field in the foreground once formed part of the Blessington Demesne and is hitherto free of any residential development. In the distance, evidence of an adjacent open cast quarrying can be discerned on the skyline. However, the Site's existing quarry is not visible from this point due to its location set behind the existing hillside.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this location in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Low** as the view is representative of a centre of population.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry are visible from this location due to screening by the intervening vegetation and landform. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the preceding time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is of **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 5 - Elevated third class road southwest of site, at Newtownpark townland

Existing View

The viewpoint is located along a short, elevated section on the brow of a hill along a quiet third-class road with few residences along it, located more than 1km southwest of the Site. This elevation allows for partially open views in the direction of the Site. Beyond the field in the foreground is the distinctive

block of mature trees of the Deerpark woodland, which blankets that low hill. Further to the north of this woodland, and set below the more distant hills, is a particularly small section of the Site that can be faintly discerned from this location. This includes some of the upper worked quarry faces on its northern end, which can be faintly made out by their paler buff colour. However, this minute sliver of the site in unlikely to be noticed, in light of the more compelling and attractive hillscape scenery to the fore and beyond the site.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The visibility of the Site's existing quarry from this point in 2023 is very similar to that of the 2020 view, whereby it contains the same extent of the site's worked quarry lands with no discernible changes between the two views.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, as the view is representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

From this distance there are no perceptible changes to the quarry when compared with the 2020 view, Thus, thus the view hasn't been altered by the current continued quarrying activity within the Site.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is of **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the impact is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 6 - R410 west of site, at Athgarrett townland

Existing View

This viewpoint is located along a busy regional road connecting Blessington with Naas. The road is well populated by single residences, of which there are four residences located within 140m of this location. Between a marginally taller roadside hedgerow (i.e. above eye level) and through a roadside field entrance, an undulating pastoral field is evident, visually 'split' by foreground trees. To the right/south of these trees, pasture ascends to a skyline marked by a mature, tree-lined field boundary, with the mature Deerpark woodland discernible on the most southerly skyline. To the left/north of the aforementioned trees, the terrain descends, while in the middle ground two berms (containing a gas network pipeline) are partially visible with their angular form backdropped by the undulating pastoral lands. Against the background and below the skyline, quarried materials from the existing Hudson Quarry can be made out, albeit at approximately 300 m distance and partially contained by the mature trees along the field boundaries.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The only difference in this view is that the gas network mounding within the Site lands was previously of bare earth in 2020 are now covered in grass in 2023. Meanwhile, the limited visibility of a small slither of the existing quarry's upper rock face through the mature trees has remained the same between 2020 and 2023.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium- Low** - as the view is representative of local community views and major routes.

Visual Impacts and Effects

The only difference in the 2023 and 2020 view is that the gas network mounds to the foreground, and outside the Site, are now covered in grass, whereas in 2020 they were more visible due to being bare earth. However, it is worth emphasizing that these are not within the site. Thus, there has been no change to the existing minor views of the quarry workings between 2020 and 2023.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the impact is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 7 - R410 northwest of site near Carter's Hill

Existing View

The viewpoint is located along the busy regional road on the southern approach to the small village of Carter's Hill and is over 1 km northwest of the Site's western boundary edge. The Site lands including the existing quarry is not visible from this location due to screening by the varied landform and roadside planting, as well as mature, tree lined field boundaries. Instead, the scene is of a rich pastoral landscape.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this point in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, as the view is representative of local community views and major routes.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry are visible from this point, due to screening by the intervening tree cover and landform. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 8 - Third class road at Baysland townland

Existing View

This viewpoint provides a brief vantage point at a field entrance along this a section of a third-class road (L2019), over 3.5 km from the site. This section of road contains ribbon development, from which several residences experience comparable views out over the countryside in the direction of the site. The mature tall field boundaries found in the direction of the Site obscure any views of the Site lands, including the existing quarry.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this point in the 2023 view as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the Site or the earlier 2020 quarry extents are visible from this location, due to screening by the intervening field hedgerows and landform. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the preceding time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the effect is **N/A**

Viewpoint 9 - County Kildare scenic route, near Kilteel village

Existing View

This view is located along the County Kildare Scenic Route 22, and this location is approximately 1 km southwest of the small village of Kilteel. There are numerous residences located to either side of this low hilltop, third-class road that offers, in places, compelling views both north and south. Views from the road look beyond the sheep fencing and pastureland in the foreground across to the series of low undulating hills with some hill tops covered by small blocks of woodland. The intervening vegetation and landform screen any views of the Site and existing quarry.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this point in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium**, as the view is representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry extents are visible from this point due to screening by intervening vegetation and landform. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 10 - Dead-end third class road east/north-east of site

Existing View

This view is located along a *cul de sac* road, approximately 700 m long, off a third-class road, with approx. 10 rural residences located on the western side of the road. This viewpoint is located approximately 60 m from the termination of the road and is also marginally inside the aforementioned Red Bog pNHA and lies adjacent to Red Bog SAC. Looking over a low, cut/maintained roadside

hedge, views in the direction of the Site can be had. However, views largely entail a distant pastoral hillside, which lies considerably west of the development with the county's plains discernible, between foreground trees, further in the background. At the end of this short public road, a private laneway extends in the direction of the existing quarry, whose presence is implied by the perceived drop in more distant terrain. Part of the existing quarry's eastern end and far western end is faintly visible through the narrow gap between the tall trees either side of this laneway.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

When looking through the small gap at the end of the tree-framed private laneway into the quarry, the 2023 partial view varies slightly from the 2020 partial view of the quarry workings visible through this small gap. This is as a result of infilling since 2020, while the new internal access road to the quarry's northern end has brought the workings slightly closer to this location, within the 2023 view. However, these views are still heavily contained and screened by intervening tree cover. In addition, this end-of-road glimpse into the site represents the only visual change between the 2020 view and the 2023 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, as the view is representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

The minor variation between the 2023 and 2020 views, as noted above, is barely discernible from this location and has not had any of the inherent visual amenity.

The magnitude of change is **Negligible.**

The significance of change is **Imperceptible** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the impact is. **Neutral.** According to Table 11-6, this is defined as:

'Scheme complements the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape(townscape)/view and maintains landscape quality'.

Viewpoint 11 - County Kildare scenic route, at Greenmount townland

Existing View

This view is located along County Kildare Scenic Route 12 and approximately 750 m from the existing quarry limits. The section of road allows for elevated views looking down onto the lower undulating hills and distant plains within County Kildare to the northwest. The predominant land use of pasture is punctuated by mature tree-line field boundaries and some blocks of woodland on higher lands, including Deerpark. Similar visual amenity is experienced by residences located within the vicinity of this section of road. The varied landform and intervening vegetation make it challenging to discern the presence of the Site's existing quarry located in the bottom of this lowland valley.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains barely discernible from this location, in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium**, as the view is representative of local community views.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site nor the earlier 2020 quarry extents are visible from this location, due to screening by intervening field hedgerows and landform. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively, the impact is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 12 - Residences along the R410, southwest of site

Existing View

This busy regional road connects Naas and Blessington and runs within 300m west of the Site. Along this section of road, there are upwards of eight residences. Most of these are on the western side of the road, with easterly views in the broader direction of the site, albeit often full or partially screened by roadside vegetation. In this scene,

Partially screened by roadside vegetation, this view looks eastward across the road, to the undulating pastureland that includes the western edge of the Site, to the distant low ridge and southwestern by the edges of Deerpark forest. However, the Site's quarry workings are not visible.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this point in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, as the view is representative of local community views and major routes.

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry are visible from this point due to screening by the intervening landform and vegetation. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the intervening time.

The magnitude of change is **None.**

The significance of change is **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect is **N/A.**

Viewpoint 13 - Residences along short *cul de sac* at Wolfestone townland

Existing View

This viewpoint is located at the end of a short *cul de sac* next to the northwest corner of the site boundary, where it enters into the Site. The short *cul de sac* road is located off the R410 Naas-Blessington Road and has four rural residences along it, with two residences located within 50m of this viewpoint. However, this view is contained by the high hedgerow along the site's western boundary. A field gate marks the entrance to the Site, a rough agricultural-style track leads into the site's pastoral lands. Upon the distant skyline, a mature tree-lined field boundary is apparent. However, the Site's existing active quarry workings are not visible from this point.

Changes to View of Site between 2020 and 2023

The Site's existing quarry remains not visible from this point in the 2023 view, as per the earlier 2020 view.

The viewpoint sensitivity is **Medium-Low**, *as the view is representative of local community views.*

Visual Impacts and Effects

Neither the existing Site or the earlier 2020 quarry are visible from this location, due to screening by intervening landform and vegetation. Thus, the development has had no visual impact or effect on the existing view within the preceding time.

The magnitude of change would be **None.**

The significance of change is of **No Change** in the Short, Medium and Long Term.

Qualitatively the effect would be **N/A.**

11.7.2.3 Summary of Visual Effects

The visual effects are summarised in Table 11-9 below.

Table 11-9 – Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint Number	Viewpoint Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance and Qualitatively
1	Elevated local road at Kilbride townland	Medium-Low	None	No Change
2	Designated Wicklow County "Prospect" overlooking Poulaphouca Reservoir	Medium	None	No Change
3	Designated Wicklow County "Prospect" at Baltyboys along the R758	Medium	None	No Change
4	Ring road along northern periphery of Blessington Town	Low	None	No Change
5	Elevated third class road southwest of site, at Newtownpark townland	Medium-Low	None	No Change
6	R410 west of site, at Athgarrett townland	Medium-Low	None	No Change
7	R410 northwest of site near Carter's Hill	Medium-Low	None	No Change
8	Third class road at Baysland townland	Medium-Low	None	No Change

9	County Kildare scenic route, near Kilteel village	Medium	None	No Change
10	Dead-end third class road east/north-east of site	Medium-Low	Negligible	Imperceptible
11	County Kildare scenic route, at Greenmount townland	Medium	None	No Change
12	Residences along the R410, southwest of site	Medium-Low	None	No Change
13	Residences along short cul de sac at Wolfestone townland	Medium-Low	None	No Change

Therefore, no significant visual effects have occurred.

11.8 REMEDIAL MEASURES REQUIRED

During the time period of 2020 to 2023, no remedial landscaping measures have taken place across the site. This is because it has not been viable to implement the remedial landscaping proposed by the 2007 application restoration plan, while different areas of the site were still being worked and accessed by machinery. The previously approved 2007 application restoration plan's main objectives included restoring the lands back to agricultural and creating a wetland area around a water body, as indicated in Figure 11-25 below.

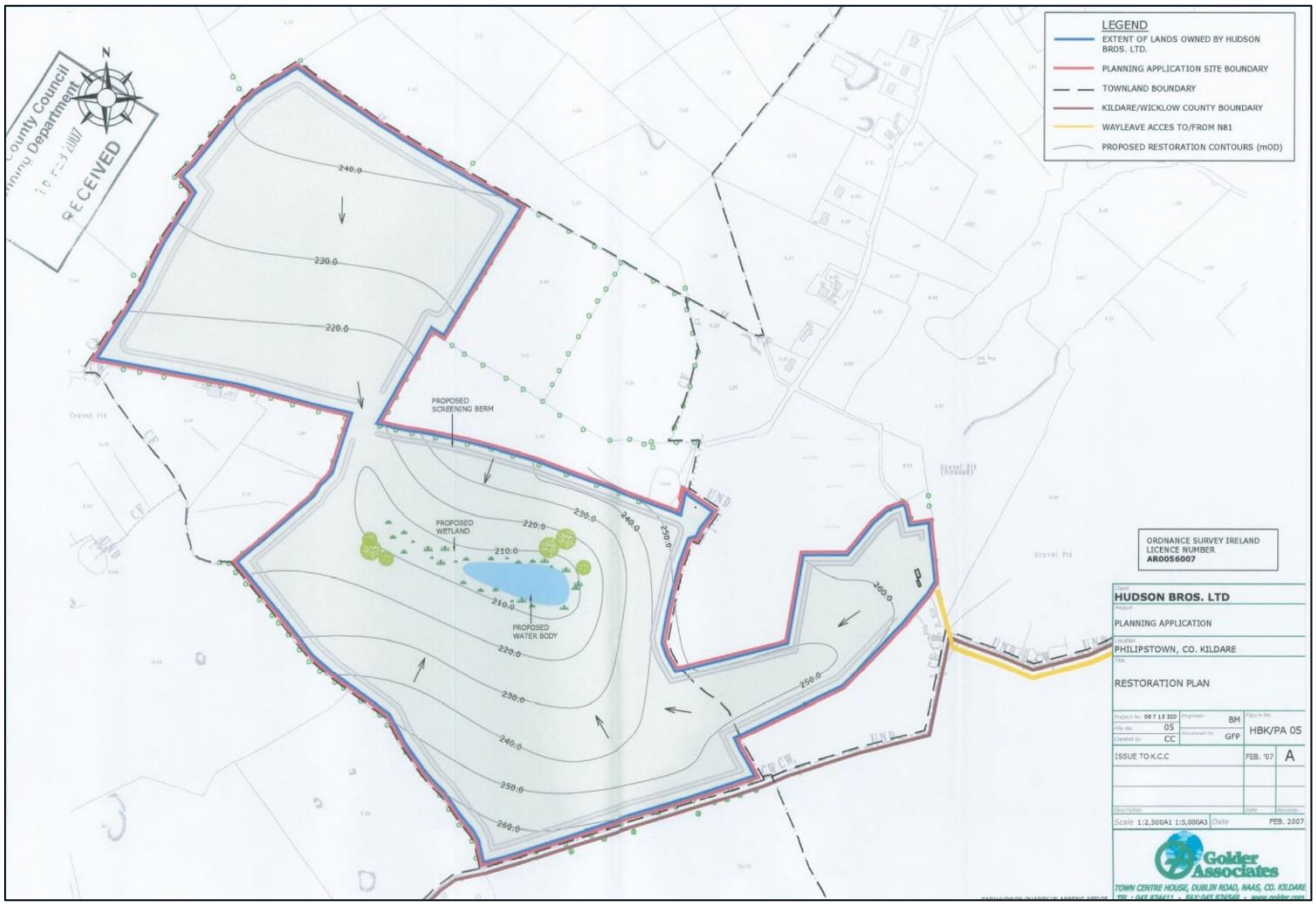


Figure 11-25: Restoration Plan from the 2007 Planning Application

This application seeks to develop upon the same principles of the restoration plan of the approved 2007 application, which is to reinstate the lands to a suitable agricultural use upon cessation of works, while also providing a net ecological gain by habitat creation and use of native planting species throughout the site. This 2024 application's plan provides further details on the proposed planting types and species to be implemented as part of the restoration. As the 2024 Site boundary has expanded further west, the concept restoration plan now includes an existing large pond (outside of the control of the applicant) and its immediate lands to be incorporated into the overall restoration proposals, as outlined in the Concept Restoration Plan, within Appendix 11B. These will be implemented at the cessation of all works across the site, with all details to be agreed in advance with KCC.

- The Concept Restoration Plan outlines additional measures to assist in assimilating the Development into the landscape and enhancing vegetation cover and biodiversity to offset the effects of vegetation and habitat loss.
- New habitat provision under the Concept Restoration Plan will include provisions for trees, hedgerow, shrub planting, and wildflower meadow grassland, along with the provision of bird/bat boxes and invertebrate housing over and above the current situation. Species assemblages to be agreed with KCC.
- The landscape mitigation and remediation measures will seek to provide additional visual screening of the site from visual receptors.

Proposed measures include:

- Management/Improvement of the retained site boundary hedgerows and trees: The existing Site boundary hedgerows and trees to be surveyed and appraised in terms of (a) species mix - for biodiversity and maximum screening (height, density of foliage), and (b) intactness/continuity. Generic improvements and spot planting to be made where required to optimise the health of the hedgerows, their biodiversity value and visual screening function.
- The site boundaries will be strengthened with native woodland planting, to provide optimum screening. This planting will be varied, in layout, to help engender these linear, engineered berms with a more naturalistic-appearing vegetation pattern. Such native planting is likely to form a considerable native woodland thicket. This will soften the form of the constructed mound, will add to the height of the mound as a visual screen, and contribute to vegetation/biodiversity gain in the landscape generally.
- The majority of the site will be restored to a mix of native grassland meadow and areas for natural colonization in keeping with the wider agricultural land use in the locality.
- Across the quarry, suitable worked slopes and faces will be selected for regrading so to help create new contour levels that will help assimilate the restored lands with the topography of surrounding lands.
- A new waterbody will be established near the western edge, with marginal and wet woodland native planting alongside it.
- In the northeast of the site, the existing waterbody will be retained, and enhanced with wetland marginal and woodland planting. This area will ultimately be covered by water as the quarry fills

to its natural level (determined by the water table), forming a permanent lake. The shallow areas will provide suitable substrate for aquatic invertebrates, with gentle grading of shoreline and marginal planting added (to be determined at the time, with the advice of an ecologist).

- The second waterbody in the northeast of the site is outside the lands under the control of the applicant. Thus, the final restoration and landform of this waterbody is to be agreed with the respective landowners, with the species to be agreed with KCC.
- In the west of the site, near-vertical banks along sand and gravel faces will create suitable Sand Martin sites. Rockfaces and benches will create areas for natural colonization aided with some strategic planting to provide for an optimum ecological habitat.
- Enhancement of existing boundary screening with native vegetation is proposed and planting should comprise native species of local provenance. Where this is not possible, plants will be selected for their fruit, berry, or nectar bearing qualities. All landscape planting within the Site will be managed for the benefit of wildlife. Any gaps in the boundary vegetation are to be planted with native hedgerows.
- Re-vegetation/colonisation of site outside of excavation: In accordance with current best practice recommendations, the areas between the excavation and the woodland-planted earth mounds around the perimeter of the Site will be allowed to re-vegetate/colonise naturally. This results in greater biodiversity and habitats most appropriate to the site conditions.
- Quarry benches: At a number of locations (to be determined at the time, with the advice of an ecologist) a mixture of trees and shrub species will be planted in an engineered substrate to form patches of habitat. This will create a platform for a more diverse flora to develop naturally and provide habitat and food resources for birds, mammals, insects and other invertebrates.
- Quarry faces: Whilst recognising the geological value of the exposed quarry faces, it is proposed that some native tree and shrub species be planted in/on fissures and ledges, to help break up the bare profile of the rock face (the southern quarry face in particular.) Other plant species will be allowed to find and colonise the area by natural means, and these will include various mosses, lichens, algae, ferns, flowering plants, etc. The gradually increasing native plant diversity will, over time, ensure that a correspondingly diverse list of animal species (birds, mammals, butterflies and other insects, other invertebrates, etc.), can become established.
- Safety measures: An agricultural fence to be installed around the edge of the excavation, to act as a visual indicator of the edge and a physical barrier for people and animals. Safety signs are also proposed to be erected on and outside the boundary fence. In addition, similar fencing will be constructed around all water bodies, with appropriate safety signs.

11.9 RESIDUAL EFFECTS

The residual effects are those as described by EPA EIAR guidance as "*The degree of environmental change that will occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect."*

Landscape Effects:

The residual landscape effects are as described in the above landscape assessment, whereby quarrying has remained an active land use across the site. This has led to further localised alternations to the site's topography since 2020, with continued extraction of the bedrock.

Thus, there are no significant residual landscape effects.

Visual Effects:

These physical changes have taken place within the quarry since 2020 and have not affected the visual amenity from the surrounding selected visual receptors, as assessed in the above visual assessment.

Thus, there are no significant residual visual effects.

11.10 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The main cumulative impacts likely to have occurred from the development is in conjunction with the adjoining quarries located on lands directly to the site's east and southeast. All other quarries are well established in the local landscape and have been active during the period from 2020 to the present. Where the additional activity occurred across the site during this intervening period, it will have had a minor intensification of an existing, decades-old land use within the locality and hillscape. Consequently, the development is not considered to give rise to any significant cumulative impacts.

11.11 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

As this application is for retrospective planning permission through the substitute consent process, it has been necessary to undertake a review of historic data, where available, that have relevance to the landscape and visual baseline extending between the period of 2020 to the present day. This was done by reviewing the landscape baseline described within the LVIA chapter of the previous 2020 application, use of aerial mapping, planning history searches and written sources.

This secondary source of information was used to help interpret changes as best as possible across the receiving landscape of the Site and wider study area that had occurred between the intervening period of the previous and current planning applications.

The visual assessment was structured upon viewpoints from surrounding public roads, which meant that it was not always possible to assert a residential receptor's exact views towards the existing site (i.e.as the exact residential receptors/homes are on private property, rather than in the public domain). Where this occurred, professional judgement was used, in keeping with best practice, to describe the likely visual effects from such receptors.

In addition, as part of the Site is a working quarry, it is not possible to safely access its full extent. However, full visibility into the quarry was established at all times, during the site visit.

11.12 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Landscape

The Site is located within an area of modified landscape in the form of established quarrying activity and existing farmed pastureland on the Kildare/Wicklow County border.

The landscape effects of the extraction activity that has occurred within the Site since 2020 is contained within a small geographic area of the overall study area. This has ensured that the works have not impacted on the surrounding field boundaries within the Site and the agricultural use of these lands has remained in place.

The only changes to have occurred within the site since September 2020 has been a relatively minor lateral extension in the northwest area of the main pit; the alternation of the site levels within the southeastern end of the quarry, because of the continued extraction, as well as some indirect

alternations to the manmade water bodies from fluctuating ground water/surface water levels. Indirect changes within the immediate landscape include the continued movement of the vehicles to/from the quarry, as the finished processed material is removed off site. This movement has continued since September 2020, collectively with the other adjoining quarries.

As the quarry has remained active since 2020 it has not been possible to implement the original restoration plan of the 2007 application, which included restoring the affected quarry lands back to agricultural lands and a wetland area. These mitigation measures would still be fully implemented once works ceased and would help revert any negative landscape and visual impacts of the development.

Overall, the landscape changes since September 2020 have been very localised due to containment of the works within the existing quarry limits. They have had a local **Moderate-Slight, Short Term** and **Neutral** effect around the area of the Application Site. However, these reduce to **Not Significant, Short Term** and **Neutral** across the wider landscape of the study area.

Visual

The visual assessment considered if the continuation of the quarrying activity within the Site since the September 2020 visual baseline has resulted in any increased views of the quarrying works from the same 13 visual receptors across the locality and wider study area.

This previous 2020 application had determined that the Site's existing quarry limits, and some of its pastoral lands, were not visible from the vast majority of the 13 selected viewpoints. This was due to these views being obscured by local landforms and intervening vegetation.

The additional site works which has occurred on Site to date since September 2020 has resulted in the lowering of the quarry floor, with a relatively minor lateral extension in the northwest area of the main pit. Meanwhile, there have been no alternations to the wider pasture lands or berms on the existing boundaries. This meant that the majority of receptors have experienced no additional views of t site works since September 2020, as the quarry walls and mounds have helped to contain the ongoing quarry activities occurring within the Site.

On review of the 13 no. viewpoints, in 12 no. such viewpoints, the magnitude of visual change was deemed to be 'none,' resulting in 'no change' to the significance and quality of visual effects. The only discernible visual change occurs from Viewpoint 10, due to changes to the workings on the Site, but only partially visible through a small gap between tall vegetation. Receptors at this viewpoint have experienced only a **Negligible** magnitude of visual change, resulting in an **Imperceptible** significance of visual effects and a **Neutral** quality of visual effect, in relation to the quarrying activity that has occurred between September 2020 and the present.

Conclusion

As determined within this assessment, the continuation of quarrying activities from September 2020 to the present have not resulted in any significant landscape or visual effects.

11.13 REFERENCES

- Kildare County Council (2022) Kildare County Development Plans 2022-2028 https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/
- Wicklow County Council (2022) Wicklow County Development Plans 2022-2028 & 2016-2022 https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Development-Plans-Strategies/National-Regional-County-Plans/Wicklow-County-Development-Plan
- Kildare County Council Planning Enquiry (Online Search Facility) https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/OnlineServices/OnlinePlanningEnquiries/
- Wicklow County Council Planning Enquiry (Online Search Facility)
- https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Planning-Applications/Online-Planning
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) (2021) *National Land scape Strategy 2014-2025* Dublin: DHLGH. https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8a59b-national-landscape-strategy/
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- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge.
- Landscape Institute (2015) *GLVIA3 – Statements of clarification*, London: Landscape Institute. https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/glvia3-clarifications/
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Appendix 11A

VIEWPOINTS

Viewpoint 1


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate

Viewpoint 2


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
270°
280°
290°
300°
310°
320°
330°
340°


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate
270°
280°
290°
300°
310°
320°
330°
340°

Viewpoint 3


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
310°
320°
330°
340°
350°
0°
10°
20°


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate
310°
320°
330°
340°
350°
0°
10°
20°

Viewpoint 4


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate

Viewpoint 5


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate

Viewpoint 6


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate

Viewpoint 7


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
80°
90°
100°
110°
120°
130°
140°
150°


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate
80°
90°
100°
110°
120°
130°
140°
150°

Viewpoint 8


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
80°
90°
100°
110°
120°
130°
140°
150°


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate
80°
90°
100°
110°
120°
130°
140°
150°

Viewpoint 9


2019 Baseline View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
160°
170°
180°
190°
200°
210°
220°
230°


2023 Existing View
2019 Baseline Extent Approximate
2023 Existing Extent Approximate
160°
170°
180°
190°
200°
210°
220°
230°

Viewpoint 10

Viewpoint 11

Viewpoint 12

Viewpoint 13

Appendix 11B

CONCEPT RESTORATION PLAN

EXISTING AGRICULTURAL LAND TO REMAIN IN CURRENT USE.
NO CHANGE IN CONCEPTUAL RESTORATION

EXISTING AGRICULTURAL LAND TO REMAIN IN CURRENT USE.
NO CHANGE IN CONCEPTUAL RESTORATION

GAS PIPELINE AND 14m WAYLEAVE

GRASSLAND TO REMAIN IN CURRENT USE.
NO CHANGE IN CONCEPTUAL RESTORATION.

AREAS OF PREVIOUSLY UNDISTURBED SCRUB AND ROUGH GRASSLAND BORDERING THE FORMER WORKED QUARRY LANDS LEFT FOR NATURAL COLONIZATION.

NEW WATERBODY WITH MARGINAL & WET WOODLAND PLANTING.

ACROSS THE QUARRY SUITABLE WORKED SLOPES AND FACES WILL BE SELECTED FOR REGRADING SO TO HELP CREATE NEW CONTOUR LEVELS THAT ASSIMILATE THE RESTORED LANDS TOPOGRAPHY WITH THAT OF THE SURROUNDING LANDS

FINAL RESTORATION AN LANDFORM OF QUARRY POND,
(OUTSIDE THE LANDS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE APPLICANT, INDICATED IN BLUE),
TO BE AGREED WITH RESPECTIVE LAND OWNERS.
SPECIES ASSEMBLAGES TO BE AGREED WITH KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

EXISTING FIELD HEDGEROWS ALONG SITE BOUNDARY ACTIVELY MANAGED WITH SUPPLEMENTARY PLANTING WHERE REQUIRED FOR OPTIMUM SCREENING AND HABITAT

EXISTING WATER BODY RETAINED AND ENHANCED WITH WETLAND MARGINAL AND WOODLAND PLANTING

STEEPER BANKS ALONG SAND AND GRAVEL FACES TO CREATE SUITABLE SAND MARTIN NESTING SITES

ANY FORMER BERMS AND STOCKPILES FOUND ACROSS THE QUARRY TO BE REMOVED AND THEIR SOIL AND GRAVEL MATERIALS REUSED IN THE RESTORATION WORKS.

QUARRY FLOOR TO CONSIST OF BOTH LARGE AREAS OF BARE EARTH ALLOWING FOR NATURAL COLONIZATION AND AREAS DIRECTLY SOWN WITH MIXES OF NATIVE POLLINATOR FRIENDLY SPECIES TO CREATE NATIVE GRASSLAND MEADOWS TO PROVIDE A DIVERSE RANGE OF HABITATS TYPES

ROCKFACES AND BENCHES CREATE AREAS FOR NATURAL COLONIZATION AIDED WITH SOME STRATEGIC PLANTING TO PROVIDE FOR OPTIMUM HABITAT

DEER PARK PLANTATION

LARGER NATIVE WOODLAND PLANTING AREA NEXT TO THE EDGES OF DEER PARK PLANTATION

ECOLOGICAL HOUSING PROVIDED THROUGH SITE IN THE FORM OF BIRD/BAT BOXES AND INVERTEBRATE HOUSING

ADDITIONAL FENCING PROVIDED AS REQUIRED TO SECURE FACES, PLANTING, PONDS AND TO RESTRICT SITE ACCESS.
OUTER FENCE LINES TIED INTO EXISTING BOUNDARY FENCING.
SECURE ACCESS POINTS TO BE PROVIDED IN FENCE AS REQUIRED FOR MAINTENANCE ACCESS.

ANY OPEN SECTIONS OF THE SITE BOUNDARY FILLED OUT WITH NEW THICK HEDGEROW TO FORM A DENSE BARRIER AND IMPROVED ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY.
ACCESS POINTS PROVIDED CONNECT INTO EXISTING ENTRANCES TO ADJOINING LANDS/LANES.

Quarry Pond

LEGEND

- APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY
- LANDOWNER BOUNDARY
- BIRD BOX (x5 no.) (indicative location)
- EXISTING CONTOURS
- AREAS AROUND ROCK FACE FOR NATURAL COLONIZATION
- BAT BOX (x5no.) (indicative location)
- EXISTING RETAINED HEDGEROWS SUPPLEMENTED BY INFILL PLANTING AS REQUIRED WITHIN SITE
- AREAS FOR REGENERATION AROUND WATER BODIES
- INVERTEBRATE HOUSING (x5no.) (indicative location)
- NOTABLE BLOCKS OF MATURE HEDGE AND WOODS NEXT TO SITE
- WATER BODIES BUFFER MARGINAL EDGE PLANTING
- EXISTING GAS PIPELINE AND BUFFER ZONE (15m)
- WATER BODY
- EXISTING AGRICULTURAL LANDS WITHIN THE SITE BUT OUTSIDE OF QUARRY'S RESTORED AREA
- SAND MARTIN BANKS
- RETAINED EXISTING SCRUB AND ROUGH GRASSLAND ALONG ENDS OF QUARRY
- AREAS AROUND QUARRY FOR NATURAL COLONIZATION
- PROPOSED HEDGEROW
- AREAS ACROSS QUARRY FLOOR REINSTATED TO NATIVE GRASSLAND MEADOW
- NEW WOODLAND FRAMEWORK FOR SCREENING AND HABITAT ENHANCEMENT
- TIMBER POST AND WIRE FENCING

PLANTING SCHEDULE

Woodland Mix - Boundary Screening Buffer
To include species from the following

Trees - 0.6-0.9m ht. - min 2-3m. ctrs	Understorey Shrubs - 60-90cm ht., in random groups of 5-15 no at min 1.5-2m c/cs
Alnus glutinosa - 10% *Betula pubescens - 10%* *Corylus avellana - 5%* *Euonymus europaeus - 3%* *Pinus Sylvestris -15%* *Prunus padus - 2%* *Quercus petrea - 20%* *Sorbus aucuparia - 5%*	*Crataegus monogyna -10%* *Prunus spinosa - 5%* *Ilex aquifolium - 5%* *Rosa canina - 2%* *Viburnum opulus - 3%* Salix aurita - 5%

Wet Woodland Mix - Next to Ponds
To include species from the following

Trees - 0.6-0.9m ht. - planted at min 3m ctrs	Marginal Planting - CG P9 & 2L, in random groups of 5-7 no at 4/sq.m
Alnus glutinosa - 40% *Salix alba - 25%* *Salix cinera - 25%* *Salix caprea - 10%*	*Iris pseudacorus, 20%* *Juncus effusus, 20%* *Juncus aerticulatus, 20%* *Cardamine pratensis, 10%* *Filipendula ulmaria, 10%* *Caltha palustris, 10%* *Potentilla palustris, 10%*

Hedgerow Planting
- Along lengths of the new hedgerows and as infill to gaps within existing hedges.

Hedgerow Trees - br 120-150cm ht., Planted individually at approx. 10-15m c/cs through the hedges	Hedge - br 60-90cm ht., planted in random groups of 5-15 at 5/lin m and double staggered
Malus sylvestris - 20% *Pinus Sylvestris -10%* *Quercus petrea - 50%* *Sorbus aucuparia - 20%*	*Corylus avellana* - Hazel - 10% *Crategus monogyna* - Hawthorn - 45% *Euonymus europaeus* - Spindle - 5% *Ilex aquifolium* - Holly - 3% *Ligustrum vulgare* - Privet- 10% *Prunus spinosa* - Blackthorn - 15% *Rosa canina* - Dog Rose - 2% *Viburnum opulus* - Guelder Rose- 10%

Meadow Grassland Mixes:
Areas of grassland sown across the quarry floor over an added topsoil layer of 0.3m depth. Selected Native Meadow Grassland mix to contain pollinator friendly rich native wildflowers species which flower at various times. Source of seed mix from an approved Irish grown supplier. e.g. Design By Nature MM12 Wild Flora for Raw improvised sub soil mix with a suitable grass nursery crop of bent and fescue grass species.

Note: Species assemblages to be agreed with Kildare County Council

REV	DATE	AMENDMENT
B	23/02/2024	UPDATE LAYOUT
A	22/02/2024	UPDATE LAYOUT AND LEGEND

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PROJECT: **HUDSON BROTHERS LTD** **SUBSTITUTE CONSENT -REIAR** **CO. KILDARE**	DATE: FEBRUARY 2024
	SCALE: 1:2000 @ A1
DRAWING: **APPENDIX 11-B** **CONCEPT RESTORATION PLAN**	DRAWN: RF CHECKED: JB
	DRAWING NO: **23386-2-101**