CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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FEBRUARY 2025

QUARRY CONSULTING

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Background

1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared to accompany an application to Galway Co. Co. for planning permission under Section 34 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of a quarry development located at Barrettspark, Athenry, Co. Galway.

1.2 Coshla Quarries Ltd. is proposing a continuation of use and an extension to an existing limestone quarry and associated concrete manufacturing facility at Barrettspark, Athenry, Co. Galway. The quarry currently extracts limestone, which is processed on-site, while the concrete manufacturing facility utilises aggregates produced at the quarry along with imported cement and sand to produce concrete products. The proposed development will facilitate the continued operation of both the quarry and the concrete production facility, ensuring the ongoing supply of high-quality materials to meet local and regional construction demands.

1.3 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (henceforth referred to as EIAR) forms part of the suite of drawings and reports submitted to Galway County Council as part of the application.

1.4 The EIAR is provided in accordance with the EU EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by EIA Directive 2014/52/EU and the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, in order to inform the consideration of the Application and provide the planning authority with the environmental information that must be taken into account when determining the Application. Land required for the Proposed Development (included within the Application site boundary) is referred to in this EIAR as 'the Site'. The Proposed Development is entirely within the administrative boundary of Galway County Council (GCC) and the EIAR is being provided to GCC as part of a planning application seeking full planning permission.

1.5 This EIAR has been prepared by Quarry Consulting, with the support of other consultancy advisors and Coshla Quarries staff. A list of the main contributors to this EIAR is provided in Table 1.2 below.

1.6 Key areas of information presented within this EIAR concern the nature and extent of the Proposed Development, the character of the receiving environment and likely interactions between the two that could result in significant environmental impacts. Information presented on the receiving environment identifies the intrinsic value and importance of potential impact receptors.

The Applicant

1.7 Coshla Quarries Ltd. are the owners and operators of the quarry site located at Barrettpark, Athenry, Co. Galway. The company and quarry specialise in extracting bulk limestone and processing it into graded aggregates for supply and sale to meet local demand for aggregates on construction, civil engineering and infrastructure projects. In addition, the site includes a concrete manufacturing facility that produces concrete products using the processed limestone aggregates, serving both local and regional markets.

The Application Site

1.8 The site is located in the townland of Barrettspark, situated approximately 13km east of Galway City centre and approximately 7km west of Athenry town centre.

1.9 The site is located approximately 155m to the north of the M6 – Galway – Dublin Motorway. Access to the site is provided via a 1km private access track that enters the site along its northern

boundary. The access track joins the L7109, which in turn joins the R339 at a t-junction approximately 1.3km north of the site. In the vicinity of the site the L7019 comprises a marked single carriage road.

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1.10 The application site is comprised of an existing operational quarry, which is broadly rectangular in shape within an overall site area of 27.5 ha. The site is situated between the 20m and 30m contour lines, with higher ground immediately west of the application site, at Droingin Lane (53m above Ordnance Datum (OD)) and to the north-east at Drumsheel Lower (52m above OD).

1.11 Beyond the site, the landscape is rural or industrial in character. Agricultural uses consist of fields used for pasture enclosed with stone walls or post and wire fencing. Industrial uses include the existing substation immediately north-east of the site and a metal-work company, further to the north-east. Tree cover is limited to some field boundaries and occasional conifer plantations, including at Palmerstown approximately 1.6km to the south-east of the site.

1.12 Surface water features are absent from the area, with the nearest feature comprising the Clare (Galway) River, approximately 2.7km north-west of the site. The river flows broadly west, before entering Lough Corrib. The nearest coastal water body is Oranmore Bay, which is c.6km south-west of the site.

1.13 Residences within the general area typically consist of one-off rural houses and ribbon development along the local road network.

The Proposed Development

1.14 The proposed development comprises the following:

- Continued use of the existing quarry to the permitted depth of minus 5 mOD, including drilling, blasting, crushing, processing, stockpiling of materials, associated roads and ancillary services (granted under Planning Ref. File No.: 09/1958 and ABP Ref.: PL07.235821);
- Continued use of open storage areas;
- Continued use of existing permitted concrete manufacturing facility (granted under Planning Ref. File No. 09230 and 19/517: ABP-304769-19);
- Continued use of the existing office (granted under Planning Ref. File No.: 09/1958 and ABP Ref.: PL07.235821);
- Continued use of the existing maintenance shed (granted under Planning Ref. File No. 09610);
- Continued use of the existing water management system (including settlement lagoons), weighbridge and wheelwash;
- Lateral extension of the existing permitted quarry area over a previously permitted extraction area (granted under Planning Ref. File No. 06/4125) of c.4.6 ha. area to a final floor level of minus 5 mOD. The total quarry extraction area will be c. 13 Ha.;
- Restoration of the application area to natural habitat after uses following completion of extraction.

1.15 The proposed development is within an overall application area of c. 27.5 hectares and is for a total period of 22 years (comprising an operational period of 20 years followed by 2 years for restoration).

Proposed Development Context

1.16 The application site is located in the townland of Barrettspark, Athenry, Co. Galway which is situated approximately 7km to the west of Athenry and 13km east of Galway City Centre.

1.17 The existing quarry and concrete manufacturing facility comprises a c. 27.5 Ha quarry operated by Coshla Quarries Ltd..

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1.18 The proposed development allows for the continuation of quarrying and processing activities and concrete manufacturing at the site and the extension of the existing quarry extraction area into lands to the east and southwest of the current extraction area. The proposed extension area measures approximately 4.6 hectares and will increase the total extraction area to c.13 hectares. The quarrying methods that will be employed in the extension areas will be a continuation of those that have been used in the existing quarry. It is not proposed to construct any new buildings or other infrastructure or introduce any new plant items or processes as part of this application.

1.19 The western part of the application site is currently taken up by stockpiles, storage areas, drainage infiltration area, a concrete manufacturing facility, and quarry management area.

Rationale for the New Planning Application

1.20 A planning permission to extend the quarry was granted by An Bord Pleanála following an appeal (Ref 308549-20) in 2023. The permission was subsequently amended under Section 146A with respect to conditions 3 and 6 only to clarify the detail (Ref 308549M-20). The amendment to conditions 3 and 6 was subject to judicial review. The amendment (Ref 308549M-20) was quashed by a decision of the High Court on 9th September 2024, with the Order subsequently perfected. The High Court order affected only the Section 146A Amendment (Ref 308549M-20). Through this process, some concerns and inconsistencies with the permission were identified. For example, the 2020 EIAR included text stating that "the quarry is operating below the groundwater table." However, comprehensive evidence, based on extensive site investigation data including boreholes, geophysical surveys, and site visits by a hydrogeologist, demonstrates conclusively that the quarry is not operating below the water table. The bedrock being quarried is located well above the water table and has low permeability, comparable to heavy clay (see EIAR Chapter 8). To resolve these matters and ensure clarity going forward, this fresh planning application and updated Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) have been prepared to remove any doubt about the nature of the development and scope of permission going forward.

1.21 A fair and robust analysis is set out for assessment by the Planning Authority. Securing a clear and comprehensive planning permission is essential for the quarry operator, given the significant capital investment required to run and operate both the quarry and the concrete manufacturing facility. Any uncertainty around planning directly impacts business operations, financial commitments, transferability, and long-term investment decisions. Additionally, unresolved planning issues create risks for employment, potentially affecting jobs and livelihoods that depend on the continued operation of the site. By addressing all matters that require clarity in this application, the operator aims to ensure long-term viability, regulatory certainty, and sustainable business operations into the future.

Need for an EIAR

1.22 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is *"a statement of the effects, if any, which proposed development, if carried out, would have on the environment"*. It is a systematic evaluation of the positive and negative impacts of a planned project or development on both the natural and human environment. The principal objectives of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report are:

- to identify and/or predict the likely significant impacts of the project / development;
- to identify what mitigation measures should be incorporated into the project / development to eliminate or minimise the likely impacts;

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- to interpret and communicate the assessment of the impact of the project / development, in both technical and non-technical terms;
- to assist a Planning Authority in its decision-making process in respect of a planning application for the project / development.

EIA Screening

1.23 Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) set out the forms of development that require an environmental impact assessment report (EIAR).

1.24 Paragraph 19 of Part 1 of Schedule 5 states that the following form of development requires an EIA:

> "Quarries and open-cast mining where the surface of the site exceeds 25 hectares".

1.25 Paragraph 22 relates to changes or extensions. It states:

> "Any change or extension of projects listed in this Annex where such a change or extension in itself meets the thresholds, if any set out in this Annex."

1.26 Paragraph 2 of Part 2 of Schedule 5 refers to extractive industry and part (b) of that section states that the following requires an EIA:

> "Extraction of stone, gravel, sand or clay, where the area of extraction would be greater than 5 hectares."

1.27 In addition, paragraph 13(a) of Part 2 requires EIA in respect of:

> "Any change or extension of development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed (not being a change or extension refer to in Part 1) which would:
>
> i. result in the development being of a class listed in Part 1 or paragraphs 1 to 12 of Part 2 of this Schedule and
>
> ii. result in an increase in size greater than –
>
> 25 per cent, or an amount equal to 50 per cent of the appropriate threshold, whichever is the greater.

1.28 The proposed development relates to the lateral extension of the existing permitted quarry area over c.4.6 ha. area within an overall application area of c. 27.5 ha. The total quarry extraction area (past and future) will cover c. 13 ha.

1.29 The extension area of the quarry is greater than the areas specified in Paragraph 13 (a) of Part 2. On this basis the extraction area of the quarry exceeds the area stated under Part 2 and an EIAR is required.

EIAR Document and Chapter Structure

1.30 The EIAR comprises the following chapters as presented in Table 1.1. The methodology used within the EIAR is outlined in Chapter 2.0 (Scoping and Methodology). The responsible parties examining the respective topic areas have also been provided in Table 1.2. The EIAR was completed by a project team led by Quarry Consulting, who also prepared a number of the chapters.

1.31 Key members of the Project team, including their experience, qualifications and accreditations are presented in Table 1.2. The experts involved in the preparation of the EIAR are fully qualified and competent in their respective field. Each has extensive proven expertise in the relevant field, thus ensuring that the information herein is complete and of high quality.

1.32 A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) accompanies the EIAR and provides a summary of the key findings of the EIAR in non-technical language.

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Table 1-1: EIAR Chapter Structure

EIAR Chapter	Chapter Title	Responsibility
1.0	Introduction	Quarry Consulting
2.0	Scope & Methodology	Quarry Consulting
3.0	Project Description	Quarry Consulting
4.0	Alternatives	Quarry Consulting
5.0	Population & Human Health	Quarry Consulting
6.0	Biodiversity	Green and Blue Ecology
7.0	Land, Soils & Geology	Hydro-G
8.0	Water	Hydro-G
9.0	Climate	Quarry Consulting
10.0	Air Quality	Quarry Consulting
11.0	Noise & Vibration	AWN Consulting
12.0	Visual & Landscape	Macroworks
13.0	Traffic	PMCE
14.0	Heritage	Dr. Charles Mount
15.0	Material Assets	Quarry Consulting
16.0	Interactions	Quarry Consulting
17.0	Mitigation and Monitoring	Quarry Consulting

EIAR Project Team

1.33 The members of the team and their respective inputs are presented in Table 1.2. In accordance with EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, we confirm that lead specialists involved in the preparation of the EIAR are fully qualified and competent in their respective field.

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Table 1-2: EIAR Project Team

Discipline	Specialist	Qualifications	Accreditations	Years of Professional Experience
Introduction; Scope and Methodology; Project Description; Alternatives; Climate; Air Quality; Interactions	Peter Kinghan (Quarry Consulting)	Geo-Surveying (Diploma) Mineral Surveying and Resource Management (BSc Hons) Environmental Engineering (Post Graduate Diploma) Geographic Information Systems (Certificate) Business Management (Masters) Environmental Sustainability (Certificate)	Member of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors UK	24
Population & Human Health; Material Assets; Planning	Irene Curran (Quarry Consulting)	Environmental Science (BSc Hons) Town and Country Planning (MSc Dist) Field Ecology (Diploma)	Chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute	20
Biodiversity	Steve Judge (Green and Blue Ecology)	Countryside Management / Environmental Management and Monitoring (BSc Hons)	Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management	19
Land, Soils and Geology; Water	Dr. Pamela Bartley (Hydro-G)	Certificate in Civil Engineering in Letterkenny RTC Diploma in Water and Wastewater Engineering Bachelor of Engineering degree	Engineers Ireland and the International Association of	20+

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		MSc. in Environmental Engineering Ph.D in Hydrogeology in Karst Limestone & Groundwater Response	Hydrogeologists (Irish Group)	
Introduction; Scope and Methodology; Project Description; Interactions; Climate and Air Quality	Rory Brickenden (Quarry Consulting)	Geoscience (BA Hons) MEngSc Water, Waste & Environmental Engineering		2
Noise and Vibration	Mike Simms (AWN Consulting)	BE and MEngSc in Mechanical Engineering	Institute of Acoustics and of the Institution of Engineering and Technology.	20
Visual and Landscape	Richard Barker (Macro Works)	MLA, PG Dip Forestry, BA Env	Corporate Member Irish Landscape Institute	15+
Traffic	Aly Gleeson (PMCE Consultants)	BSc Masters Civil Engineering		20
Heritage	Charles Mount (Dr. Charles Mount Archaeology and Cultural Heritage)	M.A. Archaeology Ph.D. Archaeology Dip. EIA & SEA Management	MIAI Member of the Discovery Programme	25+

Description of Study Team's Background and Experience

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Quarry Consulting

1.34 Quarry Consulting is an environmental consultancy that includes in its team a Chartered Mineral Surveyor, Chartered Geomatics Surveyor and Chartered Town Planner. The team have extensive experience in project managing planning applications and Environmental Impact Assessments for a range of extractive related developments.

Green and Blue Ecology

1.35 Steve Judge is a professional ecologist with 19 years experience in environmental and ecological consultancy working for a large number of clients from both the private and public sectors throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Projects include: industrial and housing development, mining and minerals, waste management, flood defence, energy and renewables.

1.36 Steve is highly experienced in undertaking Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Appropriate Assessments (Stage 1 and Stage 2), habitat and species surveys, and in the design and implementation of ecological mitigation strategies for a wide range of habitats and species.

1.37 Specialist in Ecology of freshwater systems that includes experience of eco-hydrology, wetland creation, biological water quality assessments, water level management plans and condition assessments of riparian features and structures.

Hydro-G

1.38 Hydro-G Ltd., owned by Dr. Pamela Bartley, is a specialised hydrogeological consultancy offering expert services in groundwater investigation, well drilling supervision, and environmental risk assessment. Project areas include:

- Supervision of Drilling
- Water resource assessment
- Subsoil hydrology and classification
- Assessment of groundwater vulnerability
- Environmental risk with respect to the water environment and nutrient impacts
- Assessment of Site Suitability for the discharge of treated wastewater (EPA 2000)
- Stormwater, wastewater and constructed wetland consultation.

AWN Consulting

1.39 AWN Consulting is a multidisciplinary consultancy offering specialist design advice, expert witness and litigation support in respect of a wide range of engineering and environmental disciplines

Macro Works

1.40 Macro Works is a leading consultancy firm specialising in visual impact analysis and visual impact graphics. Macro Works has considerable experience in areas such as wind energy developments, civil engineering projects and the extractive industry. Macro Works hosts a dedicated team of professionals to fulfil the key roles within their operations, including Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, geographic information systems (GIS) and photo-simulation.

PMCE Consultants

1.41 PMCE is an engineering consultancy which focuses on providing expert independent engineering advice in relation to Road Safety Engineering (Road Safety Audits, Historical Collision Analysis and Road Safety Inspections), Road Planning & Design and Traffic Analysis & Assessment. PMCE has extensive experience in Traffic Analysis and in preparing Traffic & Transportation Assessments (TTA), including planning applications and environmental impact assessments relating to proposed developments, continuation of existing operations, or for applications for licence in relation to various development types.

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Dr. Charles Mount

1.42 Dr. Charles Mount is an Archaeologist with more than 30 years' experience of archaeology, cultural heritage and project management. He has extensive experience of environmental impact assessment gained over the last 30 years in a wide range of industries in the private and semi-state sectors including energy, extractive, waste, water, residential, transport and agri-food. Dr. Mount is a member of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland and the Discovery Programme. He is a graduate of University College Dublin with an M.A, and Ph.D. in Archaeology and has completed the UCD Diploma course in EIA and SEA Management.

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References

- Environmental Protection Agency. “Guidelines on the information to be contained within an EIAR”, (EPA May 2022).

Figures

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72.01.PLANNING DRAWING 1 2 3 4 FINAL.dwg

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0	500	1000	1500	2000m	3000	4000	5000

Metres 1:50,000

NOTES

Extract from Ordnance Survey Discovery Series Mapping - Map Sheets: OS1222; OS1422

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LEGEND

APPLICATION AREA

N

QUARRY CONSULTING

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Chartered Mineral Surveyor
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COSHLA QUARRIES LTD.

CONTINUATION OF USE & EXTENSION
COSHLA QUARRY, BARRETTSPARK
ATHENRY, CO. GALWAY

SITE LOCATION

FIGURE 1.1

Scale	Date
1:50,000 @ A3	FEBRUARY 2025

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Notes:

Legend:

- Application Area
- 1km Buffer
- M6 Motorway
- R339 Regional Road
- Local Road Network
- Overhead Power Lines
- Coshla Substation

Coshla Quarries

Extension and continuation of use of an existing limestone quarry

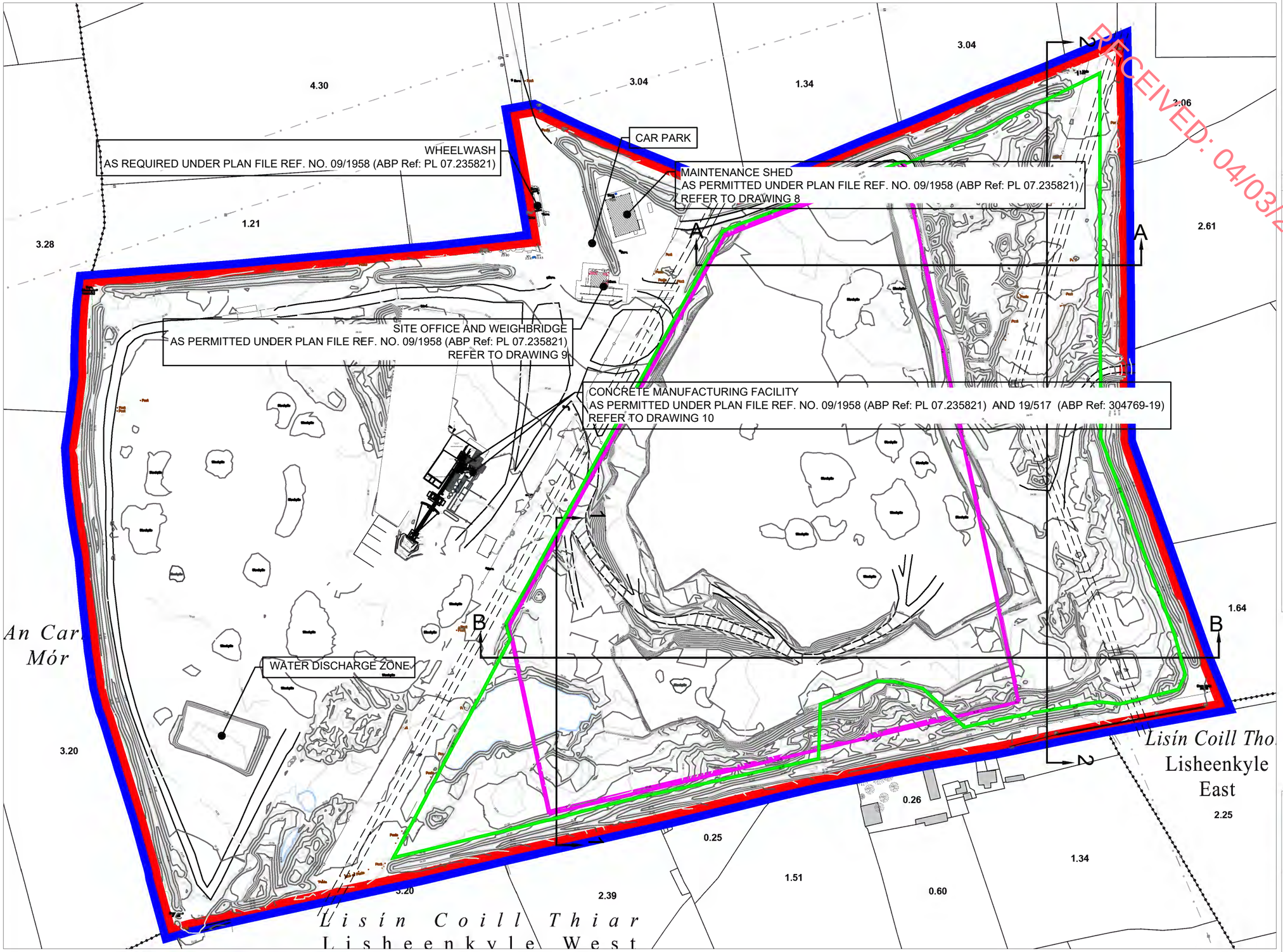
Site Context

Figure 1.2

Drawn By:	RB	Checked By:	PK
Scale:	1:20,000	Date:	January 2025

QUARRY CONSULTING
Unit 3, Cedar Crescent, Cedar Park, Westport, Co. Mayo, F28 PN47.
Email: pkinghan@quarryconsulting.ie
Tel: + 353 86 1712218

72.01.PLANNING DRAWING 1 2 3 4 FINAL.dwg



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0 80m 200

Metres 1:2500

NOTES

Extract from Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Mapping - Map Sheets: 3348; 3348-B

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TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY CARRIED OUT BY CONTROL SURVEYS JANUARY 2025

LEGEND

APPLICATION AREA

CROSS SECTION LOCATION
REFER TO FIGURE 3.2

PERMITTED QUARRY EXTRACTION AREA
PLAN FILE REF. NO. 09/1958
ABP PL 07.235821

PROPOSED QUARRY EXTRACTION AREA

N

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COSHLA QUARRIES LTD.

CONTINUATION OF USE AND EXTENSION
COSHLA QUARRY, BARRETSPARK
ATHENRY, CO. GALWAY

EXISTING SITE LAYOUT

FIGURE 1.3

Scale 1:2,500 @ A3

Date FEBRUARY 2025