CLONASLEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Environmental Impact Assessment Report
Chapter 17: Landscape & Visual

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17.1 Introduction

This report documents the assessment of landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme in Co. Laois. The objective of this assessment is the following:

- To describe the landscape and visual baseline within a defined study area; and
- Assess the likely potential effects of the proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme on landscape elements, landscape character and visual amenity.

The scope of the landscape and visual impact assessment and structure of this report is as follows:

- Assessment methodology;
- Planning policy of relevance to landscape and visual amenity;
- Receiving environment comprising a description of the landscape and visual baseline within a defined study area;
- Impact assessment comprising a description of the effects of the Proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme on landscape elements, landscape character and visual amenity;
- Mitigation measures including a description of the measures incorporated into the site layout and design of the Proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme to mitigate potential adverse effects; and
- Residual impact assessment documenting landscape and visual effects remaining with mitigation measures in place.

The assessment is informed by relevant policy contained in the Laois County Development Plan 2021 -2027. The assessment is also supported by the following:

- Photomontages of the proposed development in **Appendix 17-1**; and
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment in **Appendix 17-2**.

17.2 Methodology

The methodology for the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) is set out below and is informed by published best practice guidance documents as follows:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, (2013), hereinafter referred to as GLVIA 3; and
- Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (The Landscape Institute, 2019).

17.2.1 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

17.2.1.1 Laois County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 (CDP) is the statutory plan which documents the policies and objectives of relevance to landscape and visual amenity. Chapter 1 of the CDP contains policy on natural heritage including landscape. It refers to the published County Landscape Character Assessment for the County and sets out policy objectives as outlined below.

17.2.1.1.1 Landscape

Policy objectives for landscape character are outlined in the Laois CDP and those of relevance are documented below.

LCA 1 states *'Ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity, as indicated in Table 11.6 of the Plan, 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.'*

LCA 2 states *'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 and conserve valuable habitat including any European and National Designations.'*

LCA 3 states *'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.'*

The landscape of the site and surrounding area comprises the village of Clonaslee, located within the Lowland Agricultural Areas landscape character type, details of which are published in the county landscape character assessment in Appendix 6 of the CDP.

17.2.1.1.2 Trees woodlands and hedgerows

Policy objectives in regard to trees, woodlands and hedgerows is outlined below.

BNH 26 states *'Protect individual trees, groups of trees and woodland in the interests of landscape conservation (including townscapes) and nature conservation as part of the development management process.'*

BNH 27 states *'Protect existing hedgerows, particularly of historical and archaeological importance of townland boundaries, from unnecessary removal in order to preserve the rural character of the countryside ad promote biodiversity.'*

BNH 28 states *'Ensure that hedgerow removal to facilitate development is kept to an absolute minimum and, where unavoidable, a requirement for mitigation planting will be required comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking in to existing adjacent hedges. Native plants of a local provenance should be used for any such planting.'*

BNH 30 is a duplicate of BNH 28.

17.2.1.1.3 Views and Prospects

The CDP refers to Views and Prospects and policy as follows.

SV 1 states *'Protect views from designated scenic routes indicated in Table 11.7 and Map 11.8 (Scenic Views and Prospects in County Laois) of the Plan, 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.'*

17.2.1.1.4 Landscape (townscape) designations

Clonaslee is a designated Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). The ACA is focused on the historic core comprising Main Street, the Green and Tullamore Road. The area contains buildings of architectural merit along with some buildings of little or no merit. Policy objectives of relevance are as follows.

ACA 1 states *'Ensure that any development, modifications, alterations, or extensions within an ACA are sited and designed appropriately, and are not detrimental to the character of the structure or to its setting or the general character of the ACA and are in keeping with any Architectural Conservation Area Statement of Character Guidance Documents prepared for the relevant ACA.'*

ACA 2 states *'Demolition of buildings or substantial parts of structures in cases where those structures make a positive contribution to the special character of the ACA will not be acceptable in principle. Only in exceptional circumstances, where the redevelopment or replacement structures would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition, would demolition of this nature be considered.'*

Volume 2: Settlement Strategy of the CDP outlines objectives for Clonaslee of which the following is of relevance.

CLON 2 states *'Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Clonaslee's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development'.'*

17.2.2 Zone of Influence

The zone of influence or study area for the landscape and visual impact assessment is indicated on **Figure 17.3: Baseline Landscape and Visual Amenity**. The study area was identified with reference to desk study data and field survey data along with the proposed scheme for the purpose of assessing effects on landscape and visual amenity. The study area includes the three sites for the proposed flood relief measures and the surrounding landscape (townscape) which could potentially be affected by these proposed changes. The study area covers parts of the urban landscape within the village of Clonaslee along with part of the wooded landscape at Brittas on the southern fringes of the village and an area of farmed landscape at the northern edge of the village.

17.2.3 Sources of Information to Inform the Assessment

The assessment was informed by the *Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027* including *Appendix 2 Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)* and *Appendix 6 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).* Two site surveys were undertaken, one of which was conducted on 21st February 2024 to inform the assessment and the second, undertaken on 26th February 2024 by the project photographer for the purpose of capturing baseline photography for the preparation of photomontages.

17.2.4 Key Parameters for Assessment

The assessment of potential impacts on landscape and visual resources is based on the description of the Proposed Scheme in Chapter 5 of the EIAR. The key parameters for the assessment include consideration of the project construction activities, including temporary site compounds and the permanent changes during operation, including vegetation losses and proposed flood relief structures.

17.2.5 Assessment Criteria and Significance

The assessment of effects on landscape resources and visual amenity are separate but interconnected processes. Landscape is defined, in the European Landscape Convention (ELC, Ref. 6.), as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".

A clear distinction is drawn between landscape and visual effects as follows:

- Landscape effects relate to the effects of a Proposed Scheme on the physical characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality; and
- Visual effects relate to the effects on views experienced by visual receptors (e.g. residents, footpath users, tourists etc.) and on the visual amenity experienced by those people.

The criteria for determining the significance of effects is a two-stage process that involves defining the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the impacts. This section describes the criteria applied in this chapter to assign levels of sensitivity of the receptors and levels of magnitude of potential impacts.

The likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Scheme have been assessed by considering the changes that would occur to the existing landscape and visual amenity as a result of the introduction of the Proposed Scheme. The assessment of effects is arrived at by combining judgements concerning the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor (person) with judgements concerning the predicted magnitude of impact resulting from the proposed change. It is important to note that significance is determined on a case-by-case basis using professional judgement with the methodology below as a guide and this approach accords with the guidance in GLVIA 3.

The sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors is arrived at by combining judgements concerning susceptibility (ability to accommodate change) and value. The magnitude of impact is arrived at by combining judgements concerning size and scale of the change, the geographic extent of the change and its

duration and reversibility. This methodology is summarised in the following diagram, **Figure 17-1**, and is explained in detail below.

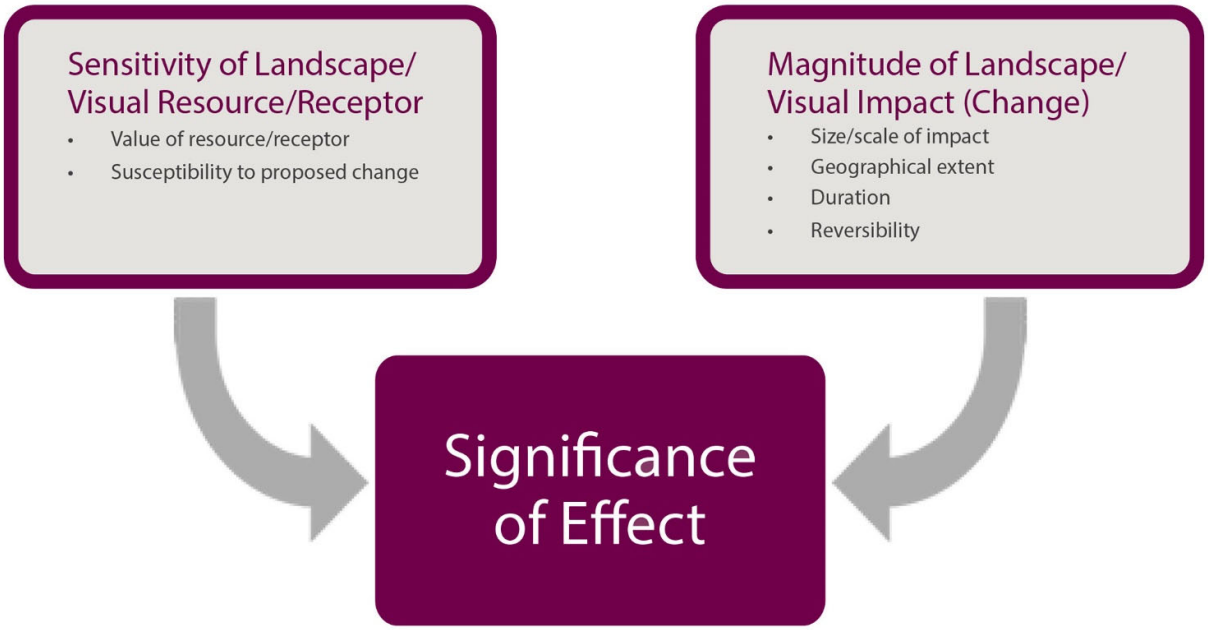

Figure 17-1: Summary of assessment methodology

17.2.5.1 Sensitivity of landscape receptors

Sensitivity is determined by assessing both the value attached to a landscape receptor and its susceptibility to the change likely to result from the Proposed Scheme. The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of 'judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape' (GLVIA 3, para 5.39).

17.2.5.1.1 Value

The value of the landscape receptor is established as follows:

- *'the value of the Landscape Character Types or Areas that may be affected, based on review of any designations at both national and local levels, and, where there are no designations, judgements based on criteria that can be used to establish landscape value; and*
- *the value of individual contributors to landscape character, especially the key characteristics, which may include individual elements of the landscape, particularly landscape features, notable aesthetic, perceptual or experiential qualities, and combinations of these contributors'* (GLVIA, para 5.44).

The value of a landscape receptor will reflect relevant designations and their level of importance as referenced in GLVIA 3 (para 5.45). It is important to note that these designations are not the sole indicator of value or valued landscapes. Non-designated landscapes can be of value. An assessment of value is made by reference to clearly stated and recognised criteria, including perceptual qualities, such as those detailed in GLVIA 3 (Box 5.1 para 5.28).

Landscapes are valued at international, national, local authority or community level with examples as follows:

- Internationally valued landscapes such as World Heritage Sites;
- Nationally valued landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks;
- Locally valued landscapes such as those covered by local authority landscape designation or, in the absence of such designation, landscapes assessed as being of equivalent value using clearly stated and recognised criteria; and

- Landscapes that are not nationally or locally designated or judged to be of equivalent value using clearly stated and recognised criteria, but are valued at community level.

17.2.5.1.2 Susceptibility

Landscape susceptibility is defined as follows: *'the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies'* (GLVIA, para 5.40).

The levels of sensitivity for landscape receptors are broadly defined in accordance with **Table 17-1**.

Table 17-1: Landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity	Susceptibility	Value
Very High	Exceptional landscape quality, no or limited potential for substitution. Key elements/features well known to the wider public. The landscape receptor is of very high susceptibility to the Proposed Scheme and has little or no tolerance to change.	Nationally/internationally designated/valued landscape, or key elements or features of national/internationally designated landscapes.
High	Strong/distinctive landscape character; absence of landscape detractors. The landscape receptor is of high susceptibility to the Proposed Scheme and has low tolerance to change.	Regionally/nationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features or landscapes judged to be of equivalent value using clearly stated and recognised criteria.
Medium	Some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors. The landscape receptor is of medium susceptibility to the Proposed Scheme and has medium tolerance to change.	Locally or regionally designated/valued countryside and landscape features or landscapes judged to be of equivalent value using clearly stated and recognised criteria
Low	Absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors. The landscape receptor is of low susceptibility to the Proposed Scheme and has high tolerance to change.	Undesignated landscapes and landscape features which have little value to local communities.
Negligible	Absence of positive landscape characteristics. Significant presence of landscape detractors. The landscape receptor is of negligible susceptibility to the Proposed Scheme and has very high tolerance to change.	Undesignated landscapes and landscape features which have no particular scenic qualities or are in poor condition or altered by presence of intrusive manmade structures.

17.2.5.2 Magnitude of impact on landscape receptors

The effect on landscape receptors and the overall judgement of the magnitude of landscape impact is based on combining judgements on 'size or scale, the geographic extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility' (GLVIA 3, paragraph 5.48).

The changes caused to landscape receptors as a result of the Proposed Scheme is evaluated in terms of their size or scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility. Duration is defined as short-term lasting 0-5 years, medium term lasting 5-10 years, long-term lasting 10-20 years and permanent lasting more than 20 years.

Levels of magnitude of impact on landscape receptors are defined in **Table 17-2**.

Table 17-2: Magnitude of impact on landscape receptors

Magnitude of Impact	Definition
Large	Total loss or addition or/very substantial loss or addition of key elements/features/patterns of the baseline (i.e. pre-development landscape) and/or introduction of dominant elements which are uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Medium	Partial loss or addition of or moderate alteration to one or more key elements/features/patterns of the baseline (i.e. pre-development landscape) and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Small	Minor loss or addition of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/patterns of the baseline (i.e. pre-development landscape) and or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.
Negligible	Very minor loss or addition of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/patterns of the baseline (i.e. pre-development landscape) and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape approximating to a 'no-change' situation.
None	No loss, alteration or addition to the receiving landscape resource.

17.2.5.3 Visual receptor sensitivity

Sensitivity of visual receptors (people) is arrived at by combining judgements concerning their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the particular views.

The susceptibility of different visual receptors (people) to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:

- *'the occupation or activity of people experiencing views at the particular locations; and,*
- *the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.'* (GLVIA 3, para 6.32).

Judgements made about the value of views takes account of the following factors:

- *'recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and*
- *indicators of value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment (such as parking places, sign boards or interpretive material) and references to them in literature or art'* (GLVIA 3, para 6.37).

The criteria for defining sensitivity of visual receptors (people) are provided in **Table 17-3** below. Sensitivity results from combining judgements on the susceptibility of the visual receptor (person) (for example resident, commuter, tourist, walker, recreationist or worker), and the numbers of viewers affected with the value attached to views.

Table 17-3: Visual receptor sensitivity

Sensitivity	Susceptibility	Value
Very High	Visitors drawn to a particular view (usually promoted or in a designated landscape), including those who have travelled to experience the views. These viewers have very high susceptibility.	Views of internationally designated countryside/land or widely known/famous views.
High	Residents. People engaged in quiet outdoor recreation where landscape is an important part of the experience. These viewers have high susceptibility.	Views of nationally designated countryside/land.
Medium	Observers enjoying the countryside from vehicles on quiet/promoted routes.	Views of designated countryside/land.

Sensitivity	Susceptibility	Value
	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which may involve appreciation of views (e.g. cyclists, golfers). These viewers have medium susceptibility.	
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve appreciation of views. These viewers have low susceptibility.	Views of undesignated countryside/land.
Negligible	People at work where the setting is not important to the quality of working life. Road users (commuters) where the view is incidental to the journey. These viewers have negligible susceptibility.	Views of undesignated countryside/land with significant presence of landscape detractors.

17.2.5.4 Magnitude of impact on visual receptors

The criteria for defining magnitude of impact on visual receptors are defined in **Table 17-4**.

Table 17-4: Magnitude of impact on visual receptors

Magnitude of Impact	Definition
Large	Complete or very substantial change in view. Change dominant involving complete or very substantial obstruction of existing view or complete change in character and composition of baseline, e.g. through removal of key elements.
Medium	Moderate change in view which may involve partial obstruction of existing view or partial change in character and composition of baseline (i.e. pre-development view) through the introduction of new elements or removal of existing elements. Change may be prominent but would not substantially alter scale and character of the surroundings and the wider setting. Composition of the view would alter. View character may be partially changed through the introduction of features which, though uncharacteristic, may not necessarily be visually discordant.
Small	Minor change in baseline (i.e. pre-development view). Change would be distinguishable from the surroundings whilst composition and character would be similar to the pre change circumstances.
Negligible	Very slight change in baseline (i.e. pre-development view). Change barely distinguishable from the surroundings. Composition and character of view substantially unaltered.
None	No alteration to the existing view.

17.2.5.5 Significance of the effect

The significance of the effect upon landscape and visual receptors is arrived at by combining judgements concerning sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The particular method employed for this assessment is presented in Table 17-5 and **Table 17-6**. Where a range of significance of effect is presented, the final assessment for each effect is based upon expert judgement.

The purpose of the LVIA is to determine, in a transparent way, the likely significant landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Scheme.

GLVIA3 identifies that *'There are no hard and fast rules about what effects should be deemed 'significant' but LVIAs should always distinguish clearly between what are considered to be the significant and non-significant effects.'* (GLVIA 3 Para 3.32).

Significance can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. The relationship between receptors and effects is not typically a linear one. It is for each LVIA to determine how judgements about receptors and effects should be combined to derive significance and to explain how this conclusion has been derived.

The identification of significant effects would not necessarily mean that the effect is unacceptable in planning terms. What is important is that the likely effects on the landscape and visibility are transparently assessed and understood.

The significance of effects on landscape, views and visual amenity have been judged according to a six-point scale: Profound, Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible or None as presented in Table 17-5, which contains a description of the significance of effect criteria.

Table 17-5: Significance of effect criteria

Significance of Effect	Landscape Receptor	Visual Receptor
Profound	Where proposed changes would be uncharacteristic and/or would significantly alter a landscape of exceptional landscape quality (e.g. internationally designated landscapes), or key elements known to the wider public of nationally designated landscapes (where there is no or limited potential for substitution nationally).	Where proposed changes would be uncharacteristic and/or would significantly alter a view of remarkable scenic quality, within internationally designated landscapes or key features or elements of nationally designated landscapes that are well known to the wider public.
Major	Where proposed changes would be uncharacteristic and/or would significantly alter a valued aspect of (or a high quality) landscape.	Where proposed changes would be uncharacteristic and/or would significantly alter a valued view or a view of high scenic quality.
Moderate	Where proposed changes would be noticeably out of scale or at odds with the character of an area.	Where proposed changes to views would be noticeably out of scale or at odds with the existing view.
Minor	Where proposed changes would be at slight variance with the character of an area.	Where proposed changes to views, although discernible, would only be at slight variance with the existing view.
Negligible	Where proposed changes would have an indiscernible effect on the character of an area.	Where proposed changes would have a barely noticeable effect on views/visual amenity.
None	Where the Proposed Scheme would not alter the landscape character of the area	Where the Proposed Scheme would retain existing views.

For the purposes of this assessment, those effects indicated as being Profound or Major or Moderate to Major are regarded as being significant in terms of the LVIA methodology. This is a typical approach for landscape and visual impact assessments adapted from GLVIA 3, which may differ from other environmental disciplines. In general, most effects with a significance level of moderate or less have been judged as not significant.

Table 17-6: Matrix used for the assessment of the significance of the effect

		Magnitude of Impact				
		No Change	**Negligible**	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Sensitivity of Receptor	**Negligible**	No change	Negligible	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor
	Low	No change	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Minor to Moderate
	Medium	No change	Negligible to Minor	Minor	Moderate	Moderate to Major
	High	No change	Negligible to Minor	Minor to Moderate	Moderate to Major	Major
	Very High	No change	Minor	Moderate to Major	Major	Profound

17.2.6 Data Limitations

Fieldwork was conducted from publicly accessible locations along with controlled access to the ICW facility on Tullamore Road and the garden of a private dwelling in which a proposed flood relief wall would be located.

17.2.7 Consultations

Consultations of relevance to landscape and visual amenity are detailed in **Table 17-7**.

Table 17-7: List of Consultations

Consultees	Feedback	Location where comments were addressed
Laois County Council	Consultation on choice of viewpoints for landscape and visual impact assessment	Agreed viewpoints are listed in **Table 17-12.**

17.3 Baseline Environment

17.3.1 Landscape (townscape) baseline

The receiving landscape comprises the village of Clonaslee along with Brittas Wood. The Clodiagh River flows in a broadly north-south direction extending through and immediately east of the centre of Clonaslee Village. The Brittas Wood area is located on the southern edge of the village and with woodland trails (linked to the Slieve Bloom Mountains) is a popular amenity with recreational walkers. The receiving landscape is close to and north of the Slieve Bloom Mountains and views of the mountain skyline are available from various locations.

Two local landscape character areas (LLCAs) are identified in the baseline and are described below and illustrated in **Figure 17-2**.

Figure 17-2: Baseline Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

17.3.1.1 Clonaslee Village LLCA

Clonaslee Village developed along two intersecting streets, Main Street (R422) which extends along an east west orientation and Chapel Street, leading to Tullamore Road which extends along a broadly north south orientation. Both of these streets meet in the centre of the village forming a cross roads. The Main Street (R422 regional Road) has the layout of an estate village, comprising a wide and open boulevard, with a continuous building line defining the boulevard on either side and creating a vista which terminates in the Visitor's Centre, formerly the Church of Ireland which is a strong focal point.

The cross roads features a small town square in front of Hickey's Pub and directly opposite, lies the bridge over the Clodiagh River reconstructed in 2011. A number of buildings and structures of architectural merit feature in the centre of the village, some of which are protected structures. The central part of the village is also a designated ACA.

The streetscape of Chapel St (Tullamore Road) extends northwards and parallel to The Clodiagh River. The streetscape, north of the crossroads features buildings on the west side and street tree planting in a juvenile state on the eastern side along with a stone boundary wall along the bank of the Clodiagh River. Glimpse views are available from this section of the Tullamore Road to the Visitor Centre (former church of Ireland) which is a key focal point in the area. At the village cross roads, the Clodiagh Bridge, rebuilt in 2011, and clad in modern building materials contrasts strongly with the older random rubble stone wall which extends north from the bridge along the line of the river. On the eastern side of the Clodiagh River, close to the bridge, there are some larger scale farm buildings built of corrugated sheet metal.

The streetscape of Tullamore Road also extends southwards and parallel to The Clodiagh River, the banks of which feature the old random rubble stone wall. Mature trees are located along the river bank on the eastern side of the street and the western side of the street features various dwellings and farmland.

The northern edge of the village along Tullamore Road features individual clusters and isolated dwellings along with an Irish Water facility in a semi-rural farmland setting. The Irish Water facility comprises an extensive site surrounded by woodland and with extensive areas of artificially created wetlands. Waymarked woodland walks converge on the edge of this site from which views of the Slieve Bloom Mountains are available along with the outline (through deciduous vegetation) of the ruined Ballynakill Castle. Occasional farmed fields are aligned along the boundary with Tullamore Road and are generally bounded by mature hedgerows with mature trees.

17.3.1.2 Brittas Wood LLCA

The southern end of the village features an extensive area of woodland centred around the Clodiagh River. The wooded area features walking trails including a trailhead to Slieve Bloom Mountains and walking loops around Brittas House and Lakes. The main trail access to this wood extends from the southern edge of the village parallel to the Clodiagh River. A timber seat is located along the trail, sited to avail of views of the river and weir and further south, a picnic bench is located adjacent to the trail. These features along with map signage serve to promote this site as an important amenity for locals and visitors.

17.3.2 Designated Landscapes (townscapes)

The historic core of Clonaslee is a designated ACA. The ACA extends out from the crossroads along main street up to and including the former church of Ireland to the east and up to and including the village green to the west. The ACA also extends a short distance along Tullamore Road both north and south of the crossroads. The ACA includes a number of buildings, shopfronts and churches many of which are of architectural merit and some of which are on the record of protected structures.

The ACA extents are illustrated (in pink) in map 6.1 B of the Laois CDP 2021-2027, an extract of which is presented in **Figure 17-3**.

The ACA extents is also illustrated in **Figure 17-2**.

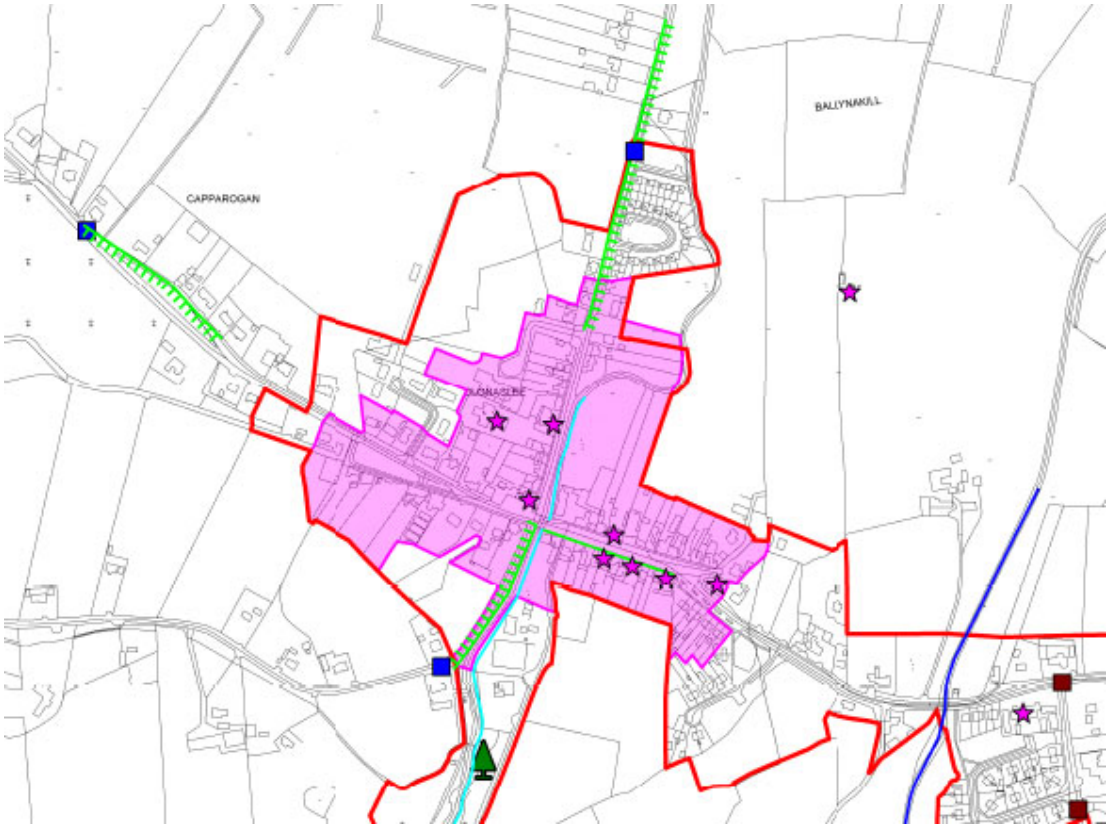

Figure 17-3: Clonaslee ACA – extract from Map 6.1 B Laois CDP 2021-2027

17.3.3 Baseline Visual Amenity

17.3.3.1 Views and prospects

There are no designated views and prospects within the study area for the assessment. The closest of these is view *'017: R422 in the townlands of Clonaslee Views over farmland and Slieve Bloom Mountains'*, cited in Table 11.7: Scenic Views and Prospects in County Laois and Map 11.8 views and prospects of the CDP. The view to the Slieve Bloom Mountains is in a southerly direction away from the proposed change.

17.3.3.2 Visual receptors at selected viewpoint locations

The visual receptors with existing views of the Proposed Scheme Area and / or potential views of the Proposed Scheme mainly comprise recreational visitors, residents of dwellings and road users. The baseline visual amenity representing these viewer types at specific viewpoint locations is described in

Table 17-8. The table lists the viewer types at each viewpoint and describes the existing views and a statement of value is provided in line with the methodology above. The location of each of the viewpoints is indicated on **Figure 17-2**.

Table 17-8: Existing visual amenity at selected viewpoint locations and assessment of value

ID	Location	Viewer Type	Description of existing view	Value Ranking
Vp 1	Within Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Individuals at work in the Irish Water Facility	Views are available of a short access road lined with trees and a boundary timber fence which extends along the banks of The Clodiagh River	Low (an undesignated landscape of limited scenic value)
Vp 2	Walking trail within and adjacent to Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Recreational visitors on foot.	Panoramic views are available of the wetlands associated with the Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road against the backdrop of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. The facility building, boundary fence and access road are visible in the distance. The ruins of Ballynakill Castle can be seen through deciduous woodland in wintertime during favourable weather conditions.	Medium to High (an undesignated landscape within the setting of the Slieve Bloom Mountains)
Vp 3	Tullamore Road	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	Views are available through a field gate of an open elongated area of pastureland against the backdrop of mature woodland which lines the banks of The Clodiagh River.	Medium (an undesignated landscape)
Vp 4	Chapel Street	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	Views are available in a southerly direction (towards the centre of the village) of the streetscape along Tullamore Road / Chapel Street including buildings and dwellings on the right-hand side and the Clodiagh River on the left-hand side bounded by a stone wall. Standard trees in a juvenile state are clearly visible along the left-hand side of the road and mature trees and wooded vegetation associated with the river.	High (Within Clonaslee ACA designation)
Vp 5	Crossroads at the centre of Clonaslee	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	Views are available of the crossroads and the bridge over the Clodiagh River along with stone boundary wall, wooded vegetation and street tree planting. A large, corrugated sheet metal farm building is also visible.	High (Within Clonaslee ACA designation. Some detracting elements such as the farm sheds)
Vp 6	Brittas Wood	Recreational Visitors on foot.	Views are available from the walking route of the Clodiagh River within a woodland setting. Part of a palisade fence is visible adjacent to the footpath.	High (an undesignated landscape of scenic quality and promoted for recreation)
Vp 7	Brittas Wood (adjacent to the weir)	Recreational visitors on foot	Views are available at short range of the walking route and the surrounding wooded setting. These views are available from a seating area positioned to attain views of the Clodiagh River and weir behind the viewer at this location. The viewer type potentially affected is the recreational walker who may pause to admire the scenery availing of the existing wooden seat close to the weir.	High (an undesignated landscape of scenic quality and promoted for recreation)

Photographs of the existing view at each viewpoint location are presented in the following images.

Viewpoint 1 - Within Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road

Viewpoint 2 - Walking trail within and adjacent to Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road

Viewpoint 3 – Tullamore Road

Viewpoint 4 – Chapel Street

Viewpoint 5 - Crossroads at the centre of Clonaslee

Viewpoint 6 – Brittas Wood

Viewpoint 7 - Brittas Wood (adjacent to the weir)

17.4 Description of the Likely Significant Effects

The Proposed Scheme comprises the introduction of flood defence structures at three locations within Clonaslee Village and Brittas Wood as follows:

- Area 1: Brittas Wood – proposed embankment achieved by raising the levels of an existing track (walking route), debris trap with access slipway, fence and gate and culvert remediation;
- Area 2: Chapel Street – proposed flood defence wall; and
- Area 3: Tullamore Road and Uisce Éireann Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW) wastewater treatment facility - proposed flood defence wall and embankment.

The assessment of effects on landscape and visual amenity has been considered for both the construction phase and the operational phase along with the do-nothing scenario.

As already referred to in the methodology, sensitivity is determined by assessing both the value attached to a landscape or visual receptor and its susceptibility to the change likely to result from the Proposed Scheme. Reference to landscape is to be interpreted as meaning either landscape or townscape. The sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors are set out in **Table 17-9**, **Table 17-10** and **Table 17-11**.

Table 17-9: Sensitivity – landscape character

Landscape Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
Clonaslee Village LLCA	The landscape (townscape) of Clonaslee is considered to have a **high** susceptibility (low tolerance to change) due to its scenic quality and designation status within the ACA.	**High** (includes ACA designation)	**High**
Brittas Wood LLCA	The local landscape of Brittas Wood is considered to have a **high** susceptibility (low tolerance to change) due to its scenic quality and the nature of the potential structures which would be at variance with this wooded and tranquil landscape.	**High** (scenic quality and promoted for recreation)	**High**

Table 17-10: Sensitivity – designated landscape Clonaslee ACA

Landscape Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
Clonaslee ACA	The Clonaslee ACA is considered to have a **high** susceptibility (low tolerance to change) due to its scenic quality.	**High** (ACA designation)	**High**

Table 17-11: Sensitivity – visual receptors at selected viewpoint locations

ID	Location	Viewer Type	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity
Vp 1	Within Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Individuals at work.	**Negligible** (People at work where the setting is not important to the quality of working life.)	**Low** (an undesignated landscape of some scenic value albeit altered with the Irish Water Facility (ICW) in the foreground)	**Low**
Vp 2	Walking trail within and adjacent to Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Recreational visitors on foot.	**High** (People engaged in quiet outdoor recreation where landscape is an important part of the experience.)	**Medium to High** (an undesignated landscape altered by the presence of the ICW. Skyline of the Slieve Bloom Mountains)	**Medium to High**
Vp 3	Tullamore Road	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	**Medium** (incidental views through a field gate of undesignated landscape)	**Medium** (an undesignated landscape with no detracting elements)	**Medium**
Vp 4	Chapel St (Tullamore Road)	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	**High** (recreational visitors enjoying views of designated townscape)	**High** (Within Clonaslee ACA designation)	**High**
Vp 5	Crossroads at the centre of Clonaslee	Individuals on foot including recreational visitors	**High** (recreational visitors enjoying views of designated townscape)	**High** (Within Clonaslee ACA designation and view includes buildings of architectural merit. Some detracting elements such as the farm sheds)	**High**
Vp 6	Brittas Wood	Recreational Visitors on foot.	**High** (People engaged in quiet outdoor recreation where landscape is an important part of the experience.)	**High** (an undesignated landscape of scenic quality and promoted for recreation)	**High**
Vp 7	Brittas Wood (adjacent to the weir)	Recreational visitors on foot	**High** (People engaged in quiet outdoor recreation where landscape is an important part of the experience.)	**High** (an undesignated landscape of scenic quality and promoted for recreation)	**High**

The assessment of effects is arrived at by combining judgements concerning the sensitivity of the landscape (townscape) or visual receptor (person) with judgements concerning the predicted magnitude of impact during construction and during operation resulting from the proposed change to arrive at a significance of effect.

17.4.1 Do-Nothing Scenario

The Do-Nothing scenario would result in no direct impacts on the receiving landscape and on viewers. There would be no wooded vegetation or tree losses and there would be no new flood relief structures introduced into the landscape of Clonaslee and Brittas Wood. Effects on the character of the landscape of Clonaslee and Brittas Wood, resulting from the visibility of the proposed change, would not arise. Direct impacts on the views and visual amenity of individuals would not arise due to the introduction of the proposed structures and wooded vegetation losses which would not arise within the receiving landscape.

The landscape of the study area will continue to evolve without the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme. The forces driving landscape change are both human and natural within the study area. Building and infrastructure development along with, intensification of agriculture is changing the character of both urban and rural landscapes. Climate change driven by human activity and flood events have the potential to alter vegetation patterns and landscape character in the longer term, although to what extent and over what timeframe is a matter of conjecture.

17.4.2 Construction Phase

The main activities which would result in landscape and visual effects during construction are listed below:

- Site Investigation works and enabling works;
- Presence of temporary works construction compounds for the duration of the construction works including the following;
  - Compound Site A Brittas Wood – This area is intended to store embankment material and facilitate large delivery vehicles that will not be able to access the Brittas Wood works area; and
  - Compound Site B Chapel Street - This location will be the main compound featuring the welfare/offices etc. Wall reinforcement steel and formwork will be stored here.
- Site clearance, including removal of trees, woodland, hedge and shrub vegetation, stripping of farmed landcover and topsoil stripping and storage;
- Earthworks excavation and deposition as required along the site, in particular at the field site for the proposed embankment on Tullamore Road and at the footpath in Brittas Wood;
- Construction of the proposed flood relief wall at the site of the Uisce Éireann ICW wastewater treatment facility on Tullamore Road;
- Construction of the proposed flood relief earthworks embankment within the field adjacent to the Clodiagh River on Tullamore Road;
- Construction of the proposed flood relief wall at the site of the existing stone wall on Chapel Street including modifications to the road alignment and provision of footpath;
- Construction of the proposed debris trap in the form of concrete poles, slipway and fence with gate access in Brittas Wood;
- Construction of an embankment along a short section (135m length) of the existing footpath in Brittas Wood. This embankment comprised of clay material will raise the levels on the pathway by approximately 0.8m at the highest point above existing ground levels and the surface will be repaved to facilitate access by Coillte Forest vehicles;
- Traffic management measures; and
- Construction lighting comprised of low energy LED lighting and security lighting which will be directional in order to minimise light spill.

The construction phase is expected to last 24 months during which, temporary and reversible effects will arise to the surrounding landscape and visual amenity. These effects are considered to be short term (under 5 years).

17.4.2.1 Landscape and Landscape Character

Effects on landscape and landscape character during construction are outlined for each of the two local landscape character areas below. The construction effects assessment takes account of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 17.5.

17.4.2.1.1 Clonaslee Village LLCA

Direct impacts will arise in the landscape of Clonaslee Village as a result of the construction works associated with the proposed flood defence wall on Chapel Street including loss of street trees and a small number of trees on the river bank at the crossroads. Loss of wooded vegetation, most of which is within private gardens, will also arise.

Direct impacts will also result from the construction works associated with the proposed flood defence wall at the Uisce Éireann Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW) wastewater treatment facility on Tullamore Road and the installation of the proposed embankment in the field adjacent to this facility. Some limited wooded vegetation losses will be required at the northern end of the embankment and at the access to the public road.

Direct impacts on the receiving landscape will also result from the temporary construction compound A which will be located in a field immediately north of Brittas Wood and the temporary construction compound B which will be located in a field behind houses on Tullamore Road along with the presence of moving and static construction plant and machinery and construction traffic travelling in the vicinity of the works.

The construction activities, temporary construction compounds and associated lighting will be present along the length of Chapel Street, Tullamore Road and in the field immediately north of Brittas Wood. Effects on the character of the Clonaslee Village landscape will arise due to the visibility of the construction activities and temporary construction compounds and construction vehicles which will temporarily alter the perception of the area. Over the 24-month construction period, construction activities within Clonaslee Village, at Chapel Street are expected to take place over approximately 11 months, followed by construction activities at the ICW facility on Tullamore Road with an approximate duration of 6 months.

Taking into account the short-term nature of the activities and the varying intensity of the works during the construction period, a **negligible to small** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Clonaslee Village LLCA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **minor** adverse and not significant effect.

17.4.2.1.2 Brittas Wood LLCA

Direct impacts will arise in the landscape of Brittas Wood as a result of the construction works associated with the proposed debris trap, slipway, fence and gate access and the construction of the embankment on a short section of the existing track. Localised tree losses will arise in the immediate vicinity of these works. These losses represent a very small proportion of the existing woodland in this area overall.

Effects on the perception of this wooded landscape will temporarily arise due to the construction activities and the presence of moving and static construction plant and machinery and vehicles exiting and leaving the area along with construction lighting. These activities would be limited to the immediate vicinity of the proposed flood relief measures within Brittas Wood and are expected to take place over approximately eight months.

Taking into account the short term nature of the activities, a **negligible** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Brittas Wood LLCA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **negligible to minor** adverse and not significant effect.

17.4.2.2 Designated Landscapes – Clonaslee ACA

Direct impacts will arise to the Clonaslee Village ACA as a result of the construction works associated with the proposed flood defence wall on Chapel Street including loss of street trees and the presence of part of the Temporary Compound B in a field behind houses on Tullamore Road. Direct impacts will be associated with the presence of moving and static construction plant and machinery, wooded vegetation losses and construction traffic travelling through the ACA.

The construction activities, temporary presence of Site Compound B and construction lighting will be present within Clonaslee ACA resulting in temporary and mostly reversible effects on the character of the ACA. These effects will arise due to the visibility of the construction activities and site compounds which will temporarily alter the perception of the area. Over the 24-month construction period, construction activities within the ACA at Chapel Street are expected to take place over approximately 11 months.

Taking into account the short-term nature of the activities and the varying intensity of the works during the construction period, a **negligible to small** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Clonaslee ACA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **minor** adverse and not significant effect.

17.4.2.3 Visual Amenity

Effects on visual amenity during construction are outlined below. The construction effects assessment takes account of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 17.5. Construction activities would not be visible from the nearest view and prospects documented in the Laois CDP this being view *‘017: R422 in the townlands of Clonaslee Views over farmland and Slieve Bloom Mountains’*.

Construction activities would potentially be visible from individual viewpoint locations documented in the baseline above. **Table 17-12** provides detail on the sensitivity of the visual receptors at each viewpoint along with a description of the proposed view during construction. The assessment of the magnitude of impact

takes account of the short-term nature of many of the construction activities with an overall duration of 24 months. Finally an assessment of the significance of effects is presented.

Table 17-12: Effects on visual amenity at selected viewpoint locations during construction

ID	Location	Description of effects during construction	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of effect.
Vp 1	Within Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Views would be attained at short range of the temporary construction works to install the proposed flood relief wall along the kerb line of the access road. These views, including moving construction plant and machinery, would be temporarily attained in the context of an existing short access road in the foreground.	**Low**	Small	Negligible to Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 2	Walking trail within and adjacent to Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Views would be attained of the temporary construction works to install the proposed flood relief wall in the distance near the Irish Water Facility building and with the integrated constructed wetlands (ICW) in the foreground. These views, including moving construction plant and machinery, would be attained against the backdrop of the wider landscape including the skyline of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Ballynakill Castle may be visible in the distance in wintertime only through leafless vegetation.	**Medium to High**	Negligible	Negligible to Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 3	Tullamore Road	Views would be attained of the temporary site clearance works and earthworks associated with the installation of the proposed embankment within the existing field. These views, including moving construction plant and machinery, would be attained against the backdrop of the mature wooded vegetation along the banks of the Clodiagh River.	**Medium**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 4	Chapel Street	Views would be attained of the temporary construction activities associated with the installation of the proposed flood relief wall and associated improvements to the footpath access along Tullamore Road / Chapel Street along with the removal of young street trees.	**High**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 5	Crossroads at the centre of Clonaslee	Views would be attained of the temporary construction activities associated with the installation of the proposed flood relief wall and associated improvements to the footpath access along Tullamore Road / Chapel Street. The removal of young street trees would be visible along with the removal of some wooded vegetation on the river bank near Clonaslee Bridge. These views would be attained in the context of the village crossroads, including buildings of architectural merit and a detracting element in the form of a large farm shed.	**High**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 6	Brittas Wood	Views would be attained by passing recreational walkers of the temporary construction activities associated with the installation of the proposed debris trap in the Clodiagh River and associated slipway, fence and gate adjacent to the existing trail. Localised wooded vegetation clearance activities would be visible in the immediate vicinity of the debris trap. The construction of the proposed embankment and refurbished footpath would also be visible. The temporary effects would be very localised, experienced by viewers over a very short section of the trail overall.	**High**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 7	Brittas Wood (adjacent to the weir)	Views would be attained of the temporary construction activities associated with the installation of the proposed embankment on a short section of the existing trail.	**High**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant

ID	Location	Description of effects during construction	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of effect.
		The temporary effects would be very localised, experienced by viewers over a very short section of the trail overall.			

17.4.3 Operational Phase

The main elements of the proposed Clonaslee flood relief scheme which would result in landscape and visual effects during operation are listed below:

- Presence of the proposed flood relief measures in three locations within the receiving landscape as follows:
  - Area 1 Brittas Wood – permanent debris trap, slipway, fence and gate access and embankment on a short section of the existing footpath measuring 135m in length along with absence of a small amount of wooded vegetation removed during construction;
  - Area 2 Chapel Street – permanent flood defence wall which will be faced in stone and designed to be sympathetic to the character of Clonaslee ACA. Absence of wooded vegetation and street tree planting, removed during construction and presence of replacement mitigation planting within gardens to be undertaken in agreement with property owners; and
  - Area 3 Tullamore Rd – permanent flood defence wall at the Uisce Eireann (ICW) Facility and a permanent embankment in the adjacent field parallel to the bank of the Clodiagh River. Absence of wooded vegetation at the northern end of the embankment, removed during construction and presence of replacement mitigation planting at the road junction to replace that removed during construction. The embankment earthworks would be topsoiled using that locally removed and seeded to re-establish a grass sward.

The assessment of effects on landscape and visual amenity during operation is presented below.

17.4.3.1 Landscape and Landscape Character

Effects on landscape are discussed in terms of direct changes such as permanent loss or change to landscape elements and features as well as the introduction of new structures. Indirect effects on the surrounding landscape character are discussed and these relate to changes to the baseline character resulting from the visibility of the proposed flood relief scheme. These direct and indirect effects are described and assessed with reference to the baseline documented above.

An assessment of the significance of effects of the proposed flood relief scheme during operation is arrived at by combining landscape sensitivity (value and susceptibility), along with the magnitude of impact (size and scale, geographical extent and duration/reversibility of the proposed change) to arrive at a level of significance of effect as detailed above in the methodology. The assessment of effects takes account of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 17.5 below.

17.4.3.1.1 Effects on Clonaslee Village LLCA during operation

Direct changes would arise to the Proposed Scheme Area within Clonaslee LLCA as a result of the proposed flood defence wall on Chapel Street and absence of wooded vegetation and street trees, removed during construction. Direct impacts will also result from the proposed flood defence wall at the Uisce Éireann Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW) wastewater treatment facility and the embankment in the adjacent field on Tullamore Road and wooded vegetation losses.

Indirect effects would arise to the character of the surrounding landscape. The proposed flood relief wall along Chapel Street would be finished in stone in a manner sympathetic to the character of the village and this, along with provision of upgraded footpath facilities would bring about some beneficial changes to the character of the surrounding village landscape. The contrast between the replacement stone wall and the more modern bridge over the Clodiagh River may result in some localised adverse effects. The absence of street trees and wooded vegetation beside the river near Clonaslee Bridge may also bring about some adverse changes.

The proposed flood defence wall at the ICW facility would not be entirely out of place due to the altered nature of the landscape at that location. The proposed embankment in the adjacent field would be shaped, topsoiled and seeded in order to fit with the character of this localised farmed landscape. These changes are considered to have a neutral effect on their immediate surroundings. Some beneficial changes would be associated with the replacement planting at the road junction near the ICW facility.

Taking into account the balance between adverse, neutral and beneficial changes during operation, a **small** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Clonaslee Village LLCA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **minor to moderate** adverse and not significant effect.

17.4.3.1.2 Brittas Wood LLCA

Direct changes would arise to the Proposed Scheme Area within Brittas Wood LLCA as a result of the proposed debris trap, slipway, fence and gate access and the proposed embankment on a short section of the existing track. The absence of a number of trees, removed during construction in the immediate vicinity of these proposed structures is also a direct impact. These losses, however, represent a very small proportion of the existing woodland in this area overall.

Indirect effects would arise to the character of the surrounding landscape. These are expected to be very localised to the immediate vicinity of the proposed structures and over a relatively short section of the Brittas Wood Trail.

The introduction of the proposed structures and the limited extent of the vegetation losses will result in some small-scale adverse changes to the character of the wooded landscape. A **small** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Brittas Wood LLCA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **minor to moderate** and not significant adverse effect.

17.4.3.2 Designated Landscapes – Clonaslee ACA

Direct impacts will arise to the Clonaslee Village ACA as a result of the proposed flood defence wall on Chapel Street including loss of street trees and modifications to the road and improvements to the footpath.

Indirect effects would arise to the character of the surrounding landscape. The proposed flood relief wall along Chapel Street would be finished in stone in a manner sympathetic to the character of the village and this, along with provision of upgraded footpath facilities would bring about some beneficial changes to the character of the surrounding village landscape. The absence of street trees and wooded vegetation beside the river near Clonaslee Bridge may bring about some adverse changes along with the contrast arising from the juxtaposition of the proposed traditional wall and the existing modern bridge over the Clodiagh River.

Taking into account the balance between adverse, neutral and beneficial changes, a **small** magnitude of impact is considered to arise to Clonaslee ACA of **high** sensitivity resulting in a **minor to moderate** adverse and not significant effect.

17.4.3.3 Visual Amenity

The proposed flood relief scheme would not be visible from the nearest views and prospects documented in the Laois CDP and as a result, there will be no visual impacts on individuals at these locations.

Elements of the proposed flood relief scheme would be visible from individual viewpoint locations documented in the baseline above. The visual effects during operation are documented in **Table 17-13** and take account of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 17.5. Over time, the proposed structures would undergo weathering and may result in some slight reduction of the visual effects.

Table 17-13: Effects on visual amenity at selected viewpoint locations during operation

ID	Location	Description of effects during operation	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of effect.
Vp 1	Within Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Views would be attained of the proposed flood relief wall along the banks of the Clodiagh River which would be seen in the context of an existing short access road in the foreground.	**Low**	Medium	Minor adverse and not significant

ID	Location	Description of effects during operation	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of effect.
Vp 2	Walking trail within and adjacent to Irish Water Facility on Tullamore Road	Views would be attained of the proposed flood relief wall as a small element in the distance near the Irish Water Facility building and with the integrated constructed wetlands in the foreground. These views would be attained against the backdrop of the wider landscape including the skyline of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Ballynakill Castle may be visible in the distance in wintertime only through leafless vegetation.	**Medium to High**	Small	Minor adverse and not significant
Vp 3	Tullamore Road	Views would be attained through a field gate of the proposed embankment within the existing field against the backdrop of the mature wooded vegetation along the banks of the Clodiagh River. The topsoil, stripped to facilitate construction, would be reinstated and seeded in order to integrate same into the immediate landscape setting. Although views of the embankment would be attained at short range, this structure would, over time assume an appearance that is consistent with the farmed field.	**Medium**	Medium	Moderate adverse and not significant
Vp 4	Chapel Street	Views would be attained of the proposed flood relief wall and associated improvements to the footpath access along Tullamore Road / Chapel Street. Loss of young street trees would be clearly visible. The proposed wall, finished in stone, similar to that existing, will be sympathetic to the character of the village and ACA. The significance of the effects recognises a balance between adverse effects associated with tree losses and beneficial effects associated with the replacement wall designed to be sympathetic to the Clonaslee ACA	**High**	Small	Minor to Moderate adverse and not significant
Vp 5	Crossroads at the centre of Clonaslee	Views would be attained of the proposed flood relief wall and associated improvements to the footpath access along Tullamore Road / Chapel Street. Loss of young street trees and wooded vegetation beside the river near Clonaslee Bridge would be clearly visible. These views would be attained in the context of the village crossroads, including buildings of architectural merit and a detracting element in the form of a large farm shed. The proposed wall, finished in stone, similar to that existing, will be sympathetic to the character of the village and ACA albeit in contrast with the modern Clonaslee Bridge. The significance of the effects recognises a balance between adverse effects associated with tree losses and beneficial effects associated with the replacement wall designed to be sympathetic to the Clonaslee ACA	**High**	Small to Medium	Moderate adverse and not significant
Vp 6	Brittas Wood	Views would be attained by passing recreational walkers of the proposed debris trap and slipway, with fence and gate access, in the Clodiagh River and absence of mature trees removed during construction. These views of the proposed debris trap and slipway would be attained along a short section of the walking trail along which, the recreational walker would also experience the proposed refurbished footpath and verges (allowed to naturally regenerate). The significant	**High**	Medium	Moderate to Major adverse and significant (localised) only for individuals on a small section of the Brittas Wood Trail in close proximity to the

ID	Location	Description of effects during operation	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of effect.
		visual effects would be very localised, experienced by viewers, at this location representing a very short section of the Brittas Wood Trail overall. Individuals elsewhere along the Brittas Wood Trail would experience none or limited and not significant visual effects.			flood relief measures.
Vp 7	Brittas Wood (adjacent to the weir)	Views would be attained of the proposed refurbished footpath, seen as a modification of the existing trail which will be raised in height and resurfaced along with reinstated verges (allowed to naturally regenerate). These views would be attained in the context of the existing weir and river (behind the viewer at this viewpoint) enjoyed by recreational walkers who may pause at the available seating area.	**High**	Small to Medium	Moderate adverse and not significant

17.5 Mitigation Measures

17.5.1 Pre-Construction and Construction Phase

The following mitigation measures are proposed to avoid, reduce or remediate, wherever practicable adverse landscape and visual effects pre-construction and during construction:

17.5.1.1 Pre-construction:

- An arboricultural survey, impact assessment and tree constraints plan has been prepared to inform the project. This will be made available in advance of construction in order that the necessary tree protection measures can be implemented. The tree survey will be fully updated at the end of the construction phase, with any recommendations for on-going monitoring of retained trees during the operational phase;
- Where the gardens of properties are subject to temporary acquisition to facilitate construction, an inventory of boundary details, accesses, planting, paving, and other features that may be disturbed or removed will be prepared prior to commencement of construction in order that these can be protected or replaced;
- An updated Construction Environment Management Plan (which will supersede the preliminary CEMP submitted in support of this application), will be developed prior to the commencement of construction activities, in order to minimise the effects on the environment, including landscape and visual amenity, during construction.

17.5.1.2 Construction Phase:

- All trees and vegetation to be retained within and adjoining the works area will be protected in accordance with the British Standard Institution (BSI) British Standard (BS) 5837:2012 ‘Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations’ (BSI 2012). Works required within the root protection area (RPA) of existing trees to be retained will follow a project specific method statement for such works, which will be prepared by a professional qualified arborist;
- Trees and vegetation identified for removal will be removed in accordance with ‘BS 3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations’ (BSI 2010) and best arboricultural practices as detailed and monitored by a professional qualified arborist;
- Trees and wooded vegetation, removed to facilitate construction, will be replanted where feasible.
- The layout of temporary construction compounds are designed to minimise visual effects, in particular, on surrounding residents of dwellings overlooking these locations;

- Temporary noise barriers completely blocking line of sight to the nearest residential receptors will be used. Refer to Chapter 14 Noise and Vibration for details.
- Topsoil stripping will be carefully undertaken and stored in stockpiles of a height not exceeding 1.5m and located as close as possible to the locations where it was removed. Topsoil will be reinstated to the locations where it was removed on completion of the engineering works. These operations will apply to the proposed path / flood relief embankment at Brittas Wood and the flood relief embankment in the field on Tullamore Road.
- Where the gardens of properties are subject to temporary acquisition to facilitate construction, an inventory of boundary details, accesses, planting, paving, and other features that may be disturbed or removed will be prepared prior to commencement of construction in order that these can be protected or replaced;
- The flood relief wall on Chapel Street and Tullamore Road will be finished in a manner that is sympathetic to the surrounding landscape of Clonaslee ACA. This will feature a stone finish similar to that existing in accordance with that specified by a conservation architect.
- A new footpath is to be provided along the full length of the works and this will be surfaced in concrete, similar to existing footpaths in the village which will weather favourably over time;
- In Brittas Wood, the short section of replacement footpath will be surfaced in a gravel material selected to match as closely as possible the existing path surfacing in use along the wider woodland trail network. Topsoil, previously stripped to facilitate construction, will be reinstated and allowed to regenerate naturally, thus developing a natural sward;
- The proposed flood relief earthworks embankment within the field adjacent to the Clodiagh River on Tullamore Road has been designed to minimise loss of mature trees and wooded vegetation. Topsoil, previously stripped to facilitate construction, will be reinstated and seeded, to develop a grass sward in order to be consistent with the existing field;
- Existing wooded vegetation will be retained as far as is feasible. Proposed planting will be introduced to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects where feasible and having regard for engineering and safety requirements as follows:
  - Replacement mitigation planting will be introduced at the road junction near the access to the ICW facility on Tullamore Road;
  - Replacement planting within private property (dwellings) including boundary hedgerows and other woody garden species in agreement with landowners;
  - Replacement planting to compensate for wooded vegetation losses in Brittas Wood at the location of the proposed debris trap and slipway and at other locations to be agreed with Coillte.
- The gardens of private properties will be restored with replacement planting and landscape detailing in agreement with each affected landowner; and
- Areas of land, formerly in use as site compounds during construction, will be restored.

17.6 Residual Impacts

Residual impacts and effects on landscape and visual amenity are concerned with the effects of a proposed development with mitigation measures in place.

17.6.1 Construction Phase

The construction effects on landscape and visual amenity have been assessed taking into account the mitigation measures referenced above. As there are no further additional mitigation measures, the residual impacts and effects during construction are the same as that reported above in Section 17.4.2.

17.6.2 Operational Phase

The impacts and effects on landscape and visual amenity during operation have been assessed taking into account the mitigation measures referenced above. Further additional mitigation measures in the form of a

limited amount of replacement planting, would reach a level of maturity by year 15 of operation and may result in a further reduction of impacts and effects on the surrounding landscape and visual amenity.

The residual effects on landscape and visual receptors at year 15 of operation would be the same as that reported above in Section 17.4.3. An exception is at viewpoint 6 Brittas Wood where the proposed planting would, at year 15, have reached a level of maturity to provide further visual screening of the project components at this location. A small magnitude of impact is considered to arise to these viewers of high sensitivity resulting in a minor adverse and not significant residual effect.

17.7 Monitoring

No monitoring is proposed during construction or operation of the Proposed Scheme.

17.8 Interactions and Cumulative Effects

17.8.1 Interactions

There would be potential interactions between landscape and visual amenity and other environmental topics. such as Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage. Refer to **Chapter 18 Interactions and Cumulative Effects** for details.

17.8.2 Cumulative Effects

The Cumulative Effects Assessment takes into account the impact associated with the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme together with other projects and plans. The projects and plans selected as relevant to the cumulative effects assessment on landscape and visual amenity are based upon the results of a screening exercise. Each project has been considered on a case-by-case basis for screening in or out of this chapter's assessment based upon data confidence, effect-receptor pathways and the spatial/temporal scales involved. Refer to **Chapter 18 Interactions and Cumulative Effects** for details.

17.9 Conclusion

The assessment considered the effects of the proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme on the surrounding landscape and visual amenity comprising the village of Clonaslee, the core of which is a designated Architectural Conservation Area along with Brittas Wood which features walking trails and is a popular and well used amenity.

During construction, the effects on landscape and visual amenity will vary in intensity through the short 24-month timescale. As these effects are largely temporary, short term and reversible, these were not considered to be significant.

During the long-term operation of the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme, effects on the townscape of Clonaslee and the designated ACA were assessed to be minor to moderate and not significant. This is largely due to the design of the scheme, in particular the flood relief wall along Chapel Street / Tullamore Road which will be similar to that existing and in sympathy with the surrounding townscape, the design of which will be guided by a conservation architect. Minor adverse effects are assessed to arise in Brittas Wood and this is attributed to the localised nature of the changes resulting from tree losses (kept to a minimum) and introduction of proposed structures, including the refurbished pathway designed to match existing.

Effects on visual amenity were considered at a range of viewpoint locations. In most cases, these were not considered to be significant during construction due to the short-term and reversible nature of these effects. During the longer-term operation of the Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme, significant visual impacts are assessed to arise at one viewpoint location in Brittas Wood, derived from the loss of wooded vegetation and the short-range views of the proposed debris trap, slipway, fence and gate and modified footpath, surfaced in materials to match existing. It is important to note, however, that these visual effects would occur over a very localised section of the woodland trail reflecting a moment in time in the overall viewer experience of walking in Brittas Wood. Elsewhere along the Brittas Wood Trail, individuals would experience lower levels of not significant visual impacts, diminishing with increasing distance from the proposals to a level where no visual change would be experienced.

The assessment also considers that the addition of the Clonaslee FRS to the existing landscape alongside other relevant projects would represent a very small incremental change to the baseline landscape and visual amenity and the addition of same would not result in any significant cumulative effects.

Table 17-14 collates all the mitigation and monitoring commitments recommended in this chapter.

Table 17-14: Summary of Likely Significant Effects and Environmental Commitments

Description of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor	Significance of Effect	Controls and Mitigation Measures	Residual Effect
Visual Impact at Viewpoint 6 Brittas Wood during operation.	Medium	High	Moderate to major adverse and significant visual effect (localised) for viewers along a very short section of the trail, diminishing to not significant visual effects with increasing distance from the proposed debris trap and related infrastructure.	Materials used in the debris trap, slipway, fence, gate and raised embankment have been chosen to be sympathetic to the character of the surrounding wooded landscape. The localised wooded vegetation losses are unavoidable. Replacement planting to compensate for wooded vegetation losses in Brittas Wood at the location of the proposed debris trap and slipway.	Moderate to major adverse only for a short section, diminishing to not significant over a short distance and overall reducing to minor adverse and not significant over time due to the maturity of the planting.

17.10 Chapter References

Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition. Oxford: Routledge.

The Landscape Institute. (2019). Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals. London.