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Introduction

- 11.1 This Chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report addresses the potential effects on material assets relating to the proposed continued use and extension of an existing sand and gravel pit, development of ancillary facilities, and restoration of the site to agricultural lands.
- The application site is located within the townlands of Mounthall and Cummer, Camross, Co. Laois, approximately 3.5 km from the Laois / Offaly county border on the southeastern flanks of the Slieve Bloom mountains and c. 3 km north of Camross village, refer to **Figure 1-1** of this EIAR. The site is approximately 9 km northwest of Mountrath and 18 km west of Portlaoise. The land interest and application areas are shown on **Figure 1-2** and **Figure 1-3** of this EIAR.
- 11.3 The advanced stripping of topsoil and overburden will be undertaken, followed by sand and gravel extraction over a period of c.10 years. Final site restoration will be achieved over the subsequent year giving a development term of 11 years.
- 11.4 The proposed development provides for the following:
 - Continued use and extension to existing permitted sand and gravel pit registered under Section 261 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended (site ref. QY05/10) within an overall application area of c. 12.2 hectares;
 - Extraction of sand and gravel (dry working) over an area of c. 8 hectares with processing and washing of material on site (closed loop water recycling system with associated silt storage lagoons 1,952.25m²), and all ancillary works and structures;
 - Site facilities consisting of mobile processing plant, portacabin site office (6.25m²), portacabin welfare facility (18.9m²), serviced portaloo toilet, bunded fuel storage and refuelling pad with hydrocarbon interceptor, weighbridge, wheelwash, water supply borehole, perimeter berms, vegetation planting and fencing;
 - Access to the site will be via the existing sand & gravel pit entrance;
 - Restoration of the site to agricultural lands; and
 - The proposed extraction operational period is for 10 years plus 1 year to complete restoration (total duration sought 11 years).
- 11.5 It is proposed that extraction within the extraction area will be carried out above the groundwater table, with the proposed pit floor sloping from northwest (c. 205m AOD) to southeast (c. 175m AOD).
- 11.6 The total recoverable reserve of sand and gravel from within the proposed development extension design scheme is estimated to be c. 800,000 tonnes. It is proposed that extraction would be carried out over a 10-year period at an average rate of 80,000 tonnes per annum.
- 11.7 The sand and gravel will be used to primarily supply value added production plants, with the remainder being transported directly to the market.
- 11.8 The proposed development will use the existing permitted access to the existing sand and gravel pit. This access is located on the local road L10317 along the northeastern site boundary.
- 11.9 Further details on the proposed development (site infrastructure, operations, environmental management systems, and controls etc.) are provided in Chapter 2 of this EIAR.



Scope of Work / EIA Scoping

- 11.10 Article 3(1) of the amended EIAR Directive provides the revised headings by which an EIAR is to be written. According to the EPA Advice Notes on Current Practice (EPA 2003):
 - "Resources that are valued and that are intrinsic to specific places are called material assets'. They may be of either human or natural origin and the value may arise for either economic or cultural reasons".
- 11.11 Under Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), material assets are taken to refer to architectural and archaeological heritage, and cultural heritage.
- 11.12 The more recently published EPA guidelines in relation to the preparation of EIAR¹ note the following in respect of material assets:
 - "Material assets can now be taken to mean built services and infrastructure. Traffic is included because in effect traffic consumes roads infrastructure."
- 11.13 The specific headings in the guidelines in relation to material assets refer to built services, roads and traffic and waste management. Chapter 14 of this EIAR address transport and traffic aspects while Chapter 12 addresses architectural heritage, archaeological heritage and cultural heritage separately to this Chapter.
- 11.14 This material assets impact assessment comprises the consideration of existing resources pertinent to the proposed development and the application site that are not addressed elsewhere in this EIAR and the likely development impacts on those resources. On this basis, this Chapter addresses built services and waste management. Built services are understood to refer to electricity, telecommunications, gas, water supply infrastructure and sewerage.

Consultations / Consultees

- 11.15 In preparing this Environmental Impact Assessment Report an initial pre-planning consultation meeting was held between officials of Laois County Council and the Applicant on the 1st of May 2024.
- 11.16 In addition, a pre-planning consultation document was issued to statutory consultees. Details of those consulted and feedback obtained is contained in Chapter 1 of this EIAR.
- 11.17 Feedback of most relevance to the assessment of material assets was received from Uisce Éireann (formerly Irish Water), which stipulated required measures to ensure the protection of supply and protection of public water supplies. The means by which these measures have been incorporated into the proposed development are described in Chapter 7 of this EIAR. The assessments within the technical chapters provide the basis for the material assets assessment, and no specific consultation has been undertaken in relation to it.
- 11.18 Consultation has been undertaken directly with EIA specialist contributors such as noise and air in the preparation of this chapter.
- 11.19 In addition, consultation has been also undertaken with utility service providers in the course of this assessment to identify the infrastructure resources on and around the application site.

¹ Environmental Protection Agency (2022). Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.



Contributors / Author(s)

11.20 This assessment has been carried out by Lynn Hassett, an Associate with \$LR Consulting Ireland. Lynn is an EIA co-ordinator with a BSc in Applied Ecology (2000) and a MSc in Environmental Impact Assessment (2001). She has 15 years of experience in EIA across the not-for-profit, public and private sectors in the UK and Ireland. She has worked on both the review of EIA on behalf of planning authorities assessing applications and in the production of them to support planning applications being lodged. She is a Practitioner member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, which she is a member of since 2001. She is also a Full Member of the Institution of Environmental Sciences, which she joined in 2023.

Limitations / Difficulties Encountered

11.21 No limitation or difficulties were encountered in the preparation of this Chapter of the EIAR.

Regulatory Background

Guidelines and Technical Standards

- 11.22 This chapter of the EIAR has been prepared on the basis of the EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022).
- 11.23 There are no technical standards relevant to this Chapter of the EIAR.

Legislation

- 11.24 There is no specific legislation relevant to this Chapter of the EIAR. However, the information provided within this Chapter is informed by:
 - Section 37D and 171A of Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended);
 - Article 94 and Schedule 6 of Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended); and
 - European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

Planning Policy and Development Control

11.25 This Chapter of the EIAR is informed by the National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040² and the Laois County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (CDP).

Significant Risks

- 11.26 The proposed development is a relatively conventional project providing for the extraction of sand and gravel using established industry methods. Extraction has previously been carried out at the site, and there is a history of quarrying at the site since pre 1964.
- 11.27 The nature and extent of the works involved do not present any risk of a major accident or disaster which would give rise to uncontrolled emissions of dangerous substances to air, land or water which could, in turn, give rise to significant adverse impacts on material assets in the surrounding local area.



² Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework (issued July 2024)

Receiving Environment

Site Context

- 11.28 The application site straddles the townlands of Mounthall and Cummer, near Camross. No previous planning permissions have been granted on the lands for sand and gravel extraction, and in relation to the existing sand and gravel pit, it is recognised that the pit was in use for sand and gravel extraction prior to October 1, 1964, and the introduction of the Planning and Development Act. The Planners report from the Section 261A quarry review process carried out by all Planning Authorities in 2012 concluded the following:
 - Section 261 of Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) Quarry Registration (site ref. QY05/10).

The subject quarry was registered under Section 261 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and conditions were imposed on the quarry in accordance with Section 261(6)(a)(i).

- Pre 1964 Land Use Rights
 - The Planning Authority accepted the pre 1964 land use rights of the operators under Section 261 by imposing conditions on the operation of the quarry under subsection 6(a)(i).
- Section 261A of Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) Quarry Review Process Recommendation.
 - The Planning Authority was satisfied that this quarry commenced operations before October 1, 1964 and that the development is such that in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the activity is consistent with bona fide pre 1964 land use rights and that no intensification or abandonment has taken place in the opinion of the Planning Authority, it therefore considers that the EIA or Habitats Directive which came into force on February 1, 1990 and 26 February 1997, respectively, do not apply to this quarry. Accordingly, Section 261A does not apply in this instance.
- 11.29 The area surrounding the application site is typically rural in character and dominated by agricultural land and forestry. Residential property in the vicinity of the application site generally comprises farmsteads and isolated / single rural dwellings along the local road network.
- 11.30 Existing land use and residential development in the vicinity of the application site is shown in **Figure 11-1**.

Study Area

11.31 For the purposes of this assessment, the study area principally comprises the application site and its immediate surrounds to within a 1 km radius. The study area was selected to ensure that all built service infrastructure within the surrounding area of the application site was identified and to ensure that any associated structures or inter-reliance in the immediate surrounding area were considered if appropriate.

Baseline Study Methodology

11.32 The baseline study in respect of Material Assets comprised a desk-top review of online and published resources, information provided by the Applicant and information contained in the other Chapters of this EIAR. Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photography of the local area were also examined.



Sources of Information

- All baseline information which was not contained within other chapters of this EIAR was 11.33 obtained from the following resources:

 - Myplan.ie (<u>www.myplan.ie</u>);
 Historic Environment Viewer (<u>www.webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment</u>);

 - OSi Maps;
 - Aerial photography;
 - Open Streetmaps (www.openstreetmaps.org); and
 - Information on infrastructure supplied by utility providers as identified in this chapter.

Infrastructure

Roads

- 11.34 Junction 18 of the M7 motorway is approximately 25 minutes' drive time from the application site. From there, access to the proposed development is via the R445 and R440 regional roads and the L1031 and L10317 local roads.
- The proposed development will use the existing permitted access to the existing sand and 11.35 gravel pit. This access is located on the local road L10317 along the northeastern site boundary. The existing access junction is long-established.

Water Supply

- It is understood from consultation with Uisce Éireann that there is no mains water supply or 11.36 group water scheme in the area, and that private residential properties in the area are supplied from private groundwater wells.
- 11.37 Drinking water will be supplied by means of bottled water. An on-site well will supply water for the sinks and will be used as a top-up supply to the closed system silt lagoons and wheelwash.

Utilities

- 11.38 Two low-voltage overhead (10kv/20kv) powerline routes bisect the application site which provide power to the local residences and farms. One line runs NW to SE and the other runs NE to SW and they intersect near the centre of the proposed extension extraction area. There are currently 5 no. electricity poles located within the proposed extension extraction area. There are no high-voltage powerlines in the vicinity of the application site, with the closest 400kv line located c. 13km south of the site and the M7 motorway at Whiteford townland.
- 11.39 There is no municipal wastewater infrastructure in the area surrounding the application site. All wastewater generated at local residential properties and farm enterprises are managed privately by way of septic tanks and effluent discharge to ground via percolation areas (for domestic wastewater) or by land spreading (for agricultural wastes).
- 11.40 OpenEir Civil Engineering mapping indicates that there is telecommunications infrastructure running along the local road network.
- 11.41 According to Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) mapping, there is no gas infrastructure close to the application site.



Settlements and Housing

11.42 Residential housing in the area immediately surrounding the application site principally comprises isolated, single rural dwellings along the local road network. Most housing in the study area has been established for several (>5) years, with the exception of R1, the landowners residence which has been constructed within the last 18 months. The locations of properties close to the application site are indicated on the land use map provided in Figure 11-1, within 500m and 1km offsets from the application boundary. The nearest large settlement cluster is at the village of Camross, located approximately 3 km to the south of the application site.

Local Enterprise

- 11.43 Farm based businesses and forestry are the principal sources of economic activity in the area surrounding the application site. There are also likely to be a number of small home or farm based rural enterprises operating out of local residential properties in the area.
- 11.44 The principal tourism / amenity resource in the local area is associated with forestry trails and hiking trails within the Slieve Bloom Mountain area.

Waste Management

11.45 As the application site is not currently in use for mineral extraction and the only present activity is agricultural pastural use, there is limited waste being generated at the site. Any waste currently generated is handled in accordance with the agricultural operator's overall waste disposal methods off-site.

Existing Land Use

- 11.46 The application site comprises an existing sand and gravel pit and agricultural pasture land, with some intervening areas of scrub / vegetation.
- 11.47 None of the lands in the immediate vicinity of the application site which are currently used for agricultural, forestry (or past extractive) purposes are zoned for any specific form of future development in the CDP.

Property Receptors

- 11.48 There are approximately 50 residences within c. 1 km of the application site as indicated on **Figure 11-1**. Of these, 21 receptors (dwellings) are identified within c. 500m of the application area.
- 11.49 There are no schools, churches, playing grounds or any other community infrastructure in the vicinity of the application site.

Impact Assessment

Evaluation Methodology

11.50 The evaluation of effects on built services and waste comprises a qualitative assessment based on an analysis of potential effects on the environment undertaken in other chapters of this EIAR. The assessment also takes into account a review of relevant literature and professional judgement in relation to impacts on built services and waste.



Infrastructure

Construction and Operational Stage Impacts - Roads

- 11.51 The proposed development will generate traffic movements over the existing public local road network with an average of 12 loads per day (24 HGV trips) to and from the site.
- The existing road network and the proposed haul route has demonstrated its ability to support comparable levels of HGV traffic to and from the application site in the past when the pit was in operation.
- 11.53 An assessment of likely development impacts on the local road network, presented in Chapter 14 (Traffic) of this EIAR, concluded that the development will have a negligible impact on traffic flows on the existing road network due to the low volumes of traffic being generated by the development.

Post-Operational Stage Impacts – Roads

11.54 On completion of extraction and final restoration activities at the site, there will be a permanent reduction in HGV traffic movements over the local road network leading to and from the application site, with consequent reduction in HGV traffic levels and an improvement in road service levels.

Construction and Operational Stage – Water Resources

- 11.55 Precautions / mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure that any potential impact of site-based activities on local surface waters and groundwater underlying the application site (e.g. accidental oil or fuel spills) is minimised in order to safeguard and protect potential surface water and groundwater resources.
- 11.56 A comprehensive well survey has been undertaken in order to understand and conceptualise the regional groundwater regime in the context of the proposed site water supply borehole. A detailed assessment of surface water and groundwater risks and measures to mitigate potential impacts are outlined in Chapter 7 (Water) of this EIAR.
- 11.57 There will be no impact on water supply arising from excavation works given the lack of public or private supply pipe infrastructure in the area.
- 11.58 An on-site well will supply water for the sinks and will be used as a top-up supply to the closed system silt lagoons and wheelwash. Drinking water will be supplied by means of bottled water.
- 11.59 The provision of a serviced portaloo on site will negate the requirement for installing a septic tank / propriety effluent treatment system.

Post-Operational Stage Impacts - Water Resources

11.60 On completion of extraction and final restoration of the pit, there will be a permanent reduction in direct risks to surface water bodies and groundwater. There will be no long-term requirement for a water supply to the site.

Construction and Operational Stage Impacts- Utilities

- 11.61 The proposed extraction and restoration of the former pit are not likely to give rise to any short-to-long term impacts on services / utilities.
- 11.62 Re-routing of the 5 no. poles within the extension area to around the periphery of the site will be carried out by ESB Networks.
- 11.63 The ancillary site infrastructure will be powered by mains electricity from the ESB's national grid via a new connection to the existing power lines in the area. This will be done in



- consultation with ESB Networks through standard connection arrangements. A super-silent diesel generator will be used to provide power to the processing plant.
- 11.64 Standard construction safety practices for working close to the existing overhead power lines at the site will be implemented for all site-based operations in order to safeguard the uninterrupted supply to local service users and to ensure the health and safety of employees, hauliers and visitors. This will be done in line with statutory obligations under health and safety legislation. ESB Networks will be consulted in relation to works close to their infrastructure and the requisite protection buffers will be observed.
- 11.65 There is no gas infrastructure in or around the application site³.
- 11.66 Telecommunications cables run along the L10317 Local Road⁴ and these will be avoided as per standard construction best practice described above in relation to electricity infrastructure. It is intended that employees at the site will use mobile telephones and there will be no requirement for connecting to the telecommunication infrastructure.

Post-Operational Stage Impacts - Utilities

11.67 On completion of restoration activities, there will be no long-term risk presented to existing utilities / services around the application site, nor will there be a requirement for introduction of services to the site.

Waste

Construction and Operational Stage Impacts

- 11.68 Prior to commencement of the proposed works, management systems will be established and implemented at the site establishment stage to control and manage all potential waste streams, to avoid waste generation where possible and to maximise re-use or re-cycling opportunities thereafter.
- 11.69 Any vegetation to be cut and removed off site during the site establishment or subsequent extraction operations will be managed by a landscape contractor and brought to an authorised waste recycling facility.
- 11.70 General office and food waste produced at the site offices will be minimised insofar as possible. Arrangements will be made for periodic collection of general / recyclable waste by authorised waste contractors and for submission of collected waste for recovery or disposal, as appropriate, at authorised waste facilities.
- 11.71 Waste oils and batteries will be stored on site in a designated (bunded) area on the concrete pad adjacent to the refuelling area, and domestic waste and scrap metal will be stored on site in designated storage areas adjacent to the site office and will be collected and recycled or disposed of at authorised off-site waste facilities by authorised waste contractors.
- 11.72 The proposed development will comply with all waste management responsibilities prescribed by conditions attached to any future grant of planning permission.
- 11.73 In light of the above, and the limited volume of wastes generated, it is considered that the generation of waste by on-site activities over the period of the extraction and final restoration works will not give rise to any significant short-to-long term effects on local waste collection / off-site waste management capacity.



³ https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/safety/dial-before-you-dig/dbyd/

⁴ https://cei.openeir.ie/emaps/#/map/53.043251,-7.607201,15z

Post-Operational Stage Impacts

11.74 On cessation of site activities, the proposed development will not have any effect on local waste generation or waste management needs over the longer-term.

Property Receptors

Construction and Operational Stage Impacts

- 11.75 The proposed development will give rise to a potential increase in the impact of ambient noise, ambient dust and traffic on residential properties and rural based enterprises in the vicinity of the application site. As outlined in Chapters 8, 10 and 14 of this EIAR, a number of mitigation measures are proposed to control and minimise these effects at the properties closest to the application site.
- 11.76 Implementation of the planned measures will ensure that the residual effects of the proposed development on nearby properties during activities at the application site are acceptable and not significant.
- 11.77 As previously noted, precautions / mitigation measures will also be applied to ensure that any potential impact of site-based activities on surrounding surface water bodies and groundwater underlying the application site (e.g. accidental oil or fuel spills) and its associated abstraction / use will be minimised. These measures are outlined in detail in Chapter 7 of this EIAR.

Post-Operational Stage Impacts

- 11.78 The effects of the proposed development on nearby properties and rural based enterprises will cease on completion of restoration works.
- 11.79 The assessment of landscape and visual impacts presented in Chapter 13 of this EIAR concluded that the proposed development, while the landform will remain altered when the site is returned to an agricultural use, the restored site will integrate into the surrounding landscape, in particular as the hedgerows within the site mature.
- 11.80 On the basis of the foregoing, it is concluded that there would be no likely significant longterm effects on residential property or rural based enterprise as a result of the proposed development.

Future Land Uses

- 11.81 Implementation of the proposed restoration plan will reinstate the application site to its original agricultural use. The completion of these activities therefore will provide a final landform which is in keeping with previous and surrounding land-use.
- 11.82 The proposed development will not effect, or interfere with, any established extractive, rural enterprise or agricultural activities or local residential property at surrounding landholdings over the short and/or long term.

Unplanned Events

- 11.83 According to the EPA guidelines, unplanned events, such as accidents, can include "spill from traffic accidents, floods or landslides affecting the site, fire, collapse or equipment failure on the site". The 2014 EIA directive refers to "major accidents, and/or natural disasters (such as flooding, sea level rise, or earthquakes)".
- 11.84 In this instance, the vulnerability of the proposed development to accidents, unplanned events or natural disasters is relatively limited owing to:



- the relatively straight-forward nature of the proposals and past experience of extraction works at the site;
- the inert nature of the materials to be extracted and the relatively remote location of the proposed works;
- the proven industry experience of the applicant, and previous use of similar plant, equipment and technologies to be used in executing the works; and
- the well-established procedures which will be employed to manage and control the works.
- 11.85 Unplanned events in relation to the proposed development could potentially relate to:
 - instability arising from extraction activities at the application site;
 - spill from HGVs and other plant or vehicles moving within the site; and
 - flooding.
- 11.86 Effects arising from unplanned events will not have any impact on material assets considered herein. Effects of unplanned events on land and water resources and the local environment are addressed separately in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of this EIAR.

Cumulative / Synergistic Impacts

- 11.87 A search of the Laois County Council and An Bord Pleanála's online planning search facilities was undertaken to identify any potential cumulative projects that have been or may be granted within the last five years in the vicinity of the proposed development.
- 11.88 Apart from small-scale agricultural and domestic projects only one project of interest has been noted within a 5 km boundary of the application site. This is the National Mountain Bike Trail Head Building consisting of a café, bike hire facility, toilets and car park at Baunreagh, Co. Laois (P. Ref. 22740), c. 4 km northeast of the site. The proposed access for construction works is via an existing service / forestry road off the R440 road, therefore there is not considered to be a potential conflict with the proposed development during construction of the visitor centre.

Transboundary Impacts

11.89 Given the location and site context of the application site, it is not anticipated that the impacts of the proposed development will have any significant transboundary effects on material assets.

Interaction with Other Impacts

11.90 It is not anticipated that the effects of the proposed development on material assets will interact significantly with other impacts.

'Do-nothing Scenario'

11.91 In a "do nothing scenario", the proposed extraction and land restoration activities would not proceed at the application site. The existing permitted sand and gravel pit would remain in its current state and the proposed extension area would not progress leaving the mineral resource unused and remaining in-situ at the site. The local supply of quality aggregates would not be augmented and would become increasingly restricted. The agricultural pastural use would continue in the rest of the application site. This would result in no significant adverse impact in relation to existing material assets, specifically infrastructure, utilities, waste or land-use.



The site would not be used to maximum advantage and the opportunit would be missed to 11.92 obtain high quality and desirable sand and gravel from a proven resource.

Mitigation Measures

Construction and Operational Stage Impacts

- (ED. 79/09/20 11.93 The mitigation of the construction and operational stage impacts of the proposed development in respect of water, air quality, noise, ecology, cultural heritage and traffic are detailed in the relevant Chapters of this EIAR. It is not considered that any additional mitigation measures, over and above those proposed for environmental emissions, are required in respect of infrastructure, utilities or sensitive receptors, other than those set out in other Chapters of this EIAR.
- 11.94 All waste generated at the site will be appropriately stored and removed by licenced contractors.

Post-Operational Stage Impacts

It is not considered that there are any long-term, post-operational impacts associated with the proposed development that require mitigation in respect of material assets, other than those identified elsewhere in other relevant Chapters of this EIAR.

Residual Impact Assessment

Construction and Operational Stage

As no significant effects are anticipated in relation to built assets or waste management and no specific mitigation measures are required in respect of material assets during the construction and operational stage, no residual impact is anticipated.

Post – Operational Stage

As no significant effects are anticipated in relation to built assets or waste management and no mitigation measures in respect of material assets are required during the postoperational stage, no residual impact is anticipated.

Monitoring

11.98 Monitoring, over and above that proposed for environmental emissions in other Chapters of the EIAR, is not required or proposed specifically in respect of material assets.



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Figures

Figure 11-1: Surrounding Land Use

