RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

APPENDIX 14-2

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENTS

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

Table of Contents

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT TABLES

This appendix comprises an impact assessment addressing the landscape effects of the Proposed Development upon each designated Landscape Character Area (LCA) scoped in for assessment in Chapter 14 of the EIAR; please refer to Section 14.4.1.3 Preliminary Assessment: LCAs of the main chapter. For terminology used in this appendix relating to the Proposed Development, see Section 14.1.3 of the main chapter.

The impact assessment for each LCA is set out in its own table below, organised by county. In the tables, the discussion of theoretical visibility in each LCA refers to Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping as outlined in Section 14.3 Visibility of the Proposed Development of the main Chapter.

It is recommended that the impact assessments in this appendix are read in conjunction with the following map in the main report:

- Figure 14-12 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and Designated LCAs

The map illustrates the boundary of each LCA and is overlain by the Half-Blade ZTV extending to the 15km LCA Study Area for the assessment of effects on landscape character; the brief and full methodologies for determining the study area boundary are provided respectively in Section 11.4.2 LCA Study Area of the same name in *Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology*.

Regarding the 'Significance of Effect' ratings in the tables below, the definition of classification is taken from the 'Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' of the Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland (EPA) (2022); refer to Section 1.6.5 'Landscape Effects Assessment Matrix' in *Appendix 14-1*.

1.1 Sensitivity Ratings

Ireland does not currently have standardised, nationwide sensitivity ratings for Landscape Character Assessment. Moreover, the Proposed turbines are located within LCAs of two counties, Co. Kilkenny and Co. Laois, using differing methods, scales, hierarchy and naming conventions to represent the sensitivity of individual LCAs. Therefore, this LVIA assigns a standardised sensitivity rating using the classification scale:

- Very High;
- High;
- Medium;
- Low.

The sensitivity rating considers key characteristics and sensitivity descriptions (and where applicable, the sensitivity ratings) in the respective county development plans, as well as any relevant wind energy capacity designations and policy. A rationale for each rating is provided in the assessment tables included below. Note that LCAs at the 'Very High' end of the scale would include very sensitive landscapes of national importance, whilst LCAs at the 'Low' end of the scale might be locally important landscapes, but those which do not comprise receptors or characteristics of unique or national value.

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.2 County Kilkenny

Assessment in this section was informed by landscape designations in the Kilkenny County Development Plan (KKCDP) 2021-2027 and the Landscape Character Assessment of the County Kilkenny 2008-2014 (hereafter, LACK), which forms Appendix C to the previous 2008 development plan and remains acknowledged in the current 2021-2027 KKCDP, as well as Appendix K: Wind Energy Development Strategy of the KKCDP (hereafter, Kilkenny WES).

1.2.1 KK-LCA-A: Slieveardagh Hills (North)

County Kilkenny LCA-A: Slieveardagh Hills (North)	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-A
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	5 no. of the eight Proposed turbines are located within this LCA. At its furthest point this LCA is approximately 12.4km from T8.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *"Rural agricultural landscape.* › *The general land-use on the uplands is agricultural grazing, however some areas are occupied by conifer and broad-leaved forests.* › *Land parcels are of a medium size, with a proliferation of hawthorn and gorse.* › *Gently undulating topography is presented within the upland area of this character unit.* › *Hedgerows are generally unmaintained.* › *A dispersed pattern of residential and traditional farmhouse structures are indicative of a low population density."*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 3 – Normal"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the third of five sensitivity classes assigned to LCAs within County Kilkenny. Areas classified under this sensitivity rating are described as *"a common character type with a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments."* In addition, the LACK indicates that this LCA generally has '*no significant landscape value'* but that the northern hills specifically have '*certain scenic value'*. The land area within this LCA containing the Proposed turbines is classified in the Kilkenny WES as *"Open for Consideration*" to wind energy development. The 8 no. Proposed turbines are located within two linear landscape units adjacent and parallel to each other across the Kilkenny-Laois border, both characterised by slightly elevated topography comprising agricultural fields, typical of a modified, remote, working landscape of local value suitable for wind energy development. In relation to landscape sensitivity, the LACK outlines that *"areas where enclosing topography, screening vegetation and/or existing development are present should have a high potential to absorb new development"* and notes that the *"Slieveardagh Hills were generally perceived as being most suitable"* for various developments including wind energy. The physical shielding of the Slieveardagh Hills and adjacent elevated features nearly fully enclose the proposed turbines within the Nore Valley, thereby largely

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

	reducing visual intrusion outside the enclosing vistas and providing a strong degree of visual containment, especially in areas to the west of the Proposed Development. The DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines state that landscape sensitivity is the key consideration in the evaluation of areas suitable for wind energy development. According to the guidance, in general, it is preferable to site commercial wind energy developments in landscapes of lower sensitivity, as the change arising will ultimately result in a lower impact upon the landscape when appropriate siting and design are followed. According to the LACK, the sensitivity of KK-LCA-A as outlined in the policy is low in comparison with other LCAs in the county. On balance, the sensitivity of KK-LCA-A to wind farm development is deemed to be **Low**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	There is full theoretical visibility of the Proposed turbines for the areas of this LCA within 5km. For the majority of areas in this LCA beyond 5km, there is no theoretical visibility due to visual screening by elevated topographical features. There is one area of mixed theoretical visibility at approximately 10km due to elevated landforms at that distance. The on-site visibility appraisal concluded that the greatest visibility of the proposed turbines is concentrated to those areas in close proximity of the site, as vegetation and undulating topography limit views to the wider landscape, especially to the west and south-west of this LCA. Photomontages VP06 and VP07 are located within this LCA, along with one photowire viewpoint, PWVP-A.
Cumulative Effects	1 no. existing wind energy development is located in this LCA: › Existing Lisdowney Wind Farm (4 turbines) All turbines of the existing Lisdowney Wind Farm are located at the north-eastern part of the LCA, approximately 4km south-west of Proposed Development. As shown by the photomontages, the Lisdowney turbines will be seen on the same upland ridge in the LCA as the Proposed turbines, thus some contribution to cumulative effects on the character of the landscape can be expected.
Magnitude of Change	**Moderate** *"A more limited loss of or change to landscape features over a medium extent which will result in some change to landscape features and aesthetics. Could include the addition of some new uncharacteristic features or elements that would lead to the potential for change in landscape character in a localised area or part of a landscape character area. Would include moderate effects on the overall landscape character that do not affect key characteristics."*
Significance of Effect	**Low × Moderate = Minor = "Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*
Mitigation Factors	› Due to rises in topography west of the proposed turbines substantially enclosing the Proposed turbines within 5km, large areas in the west of this LCA have no visibility of the proposed turbines. Therefore, the greatest effects on landscape character will be localised within 5km. › The turbine layout has been designed to create a coherent cluster of turbines, contiguous and connected to each other visually and with consistent spacing in line with the guidance for design and siting of wind farms within the 'Hilly

	and Flat Farmland Character Type' in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines, the landscape character type of this LCA. › Landscape within this LCA also matches the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines with a patchwork of fields delineated by hedgerows which vary in size across the EIAR Site Boundary. These dense and largely unmaintained hedgerows which are typical throughout this LCA (see LCA Key Characteristics) will substantially limit actual visibility of the proposed turbines within 5km of the proposed turbines. › As stated in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines, Hilly and Flat Farmland is not highly sensitive. › The Proposed turbines within this LCA are strategically sited on landcover that has been highly modified from its natural state. The landscape lacks unique or sensitive features and primarily consists of agricultural farmland. As agricultural farmland, this landcover is considered to have relatively low sensitivity to wind farm development.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.2.2 KK-LCA-A3: Slieveardagh Eastern Transitional Area

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

County Kilkenny LCA-A3: Slieveardagh Eastern Transitional Area	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-A3
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located approximately 700m south of the nearest proposed turbine (T7) and approximately 11.3km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	The eastern transition area runs along the base of the northern Slieveardagh Hills and parallel to the River Nore valley. The towns of Freshford, Dunningstown and Lisdowney are within this transition area. › *'High acceptability for potential development'.* › *'Not perceived as being of a special or sensitive nature'.* › *'Contained views towards Kilkenny City and generally medium sized fields bounded with scrub (unmaintained) hedgerows and low trees'.* › *'These areas have zones of poorly drained soils and low-quality pasturelands'.* › *'Shelter Vegetation Shelter vegetation, represented in this unit by existing conifer plantations, some tall tree hedgerows, has a shielding and absorbing quality in landscape terms. It can provide a natural visual barrier and also adds to the complexity of a vista, breaking it up to provide scale and containment for built forms'.* › *Low Vegetation - Predominantly low vegetation as represented in this unit by moorland and pastureland grasses is generally uniform in appearance, failing to break up vistas, and allowing long distance visibility'.*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 1 – Robust"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the lowest of five sensitivity classes. Within the LACK, the Slieveardagh Transition Area is defined as "*not perceived as being of a special or sensitive nature. Furthermore, A2 and A3 areas are perceived as having high acceptability for potential development."* As outlined in the Kilkenny WES, this LCA corresponds with land area classified as "Open for Consideration". In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be **Low**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	According to ZTV mapping, approximately three-quarters of this LCA area has theoretical visibility. Most of this visibility occurs in close proximity and medium proximity (up to 10km) of the Proposed Turbines and to the N77 National Road. Further to the west and south, the less visibility there is. Photowire PWVP-D demonstrates this, showing no visibility due to visual screening from vegetation; this is also the case in the LCA further south of this viewpoint. The on-site visibility appraisal concluded that only elevated vantage points will have very limited views with the main visibility occurring in close proximity.
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.

RECEIVED: 04/07/2025

Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."*
Significance of Effect	**Low × Moderate = Minor = "Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*
Mitigation Factors	› Despite the widespread theoretical visibility indicated for this LCA, in reality, views towards the proposed turbines will be primarily very limited due to unmaintained hedgerows and vegetation which is a typical characteristic of this LCA. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.2.3 KK-LCA-B: Castlecomer Plateau

County Kilkenny LCA-B: Castlecomer Plateau	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-B
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located approximately 4km east of the nearest proposed turbine (T7) and approximately 15km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *"Rural landscape with many natural and scenic attractions.* › *General landuse on the Plateau is pastureland, however, large areas have been planted with coniferous trees.* › *Low vegetation, represented in this unit by grassland, moorland, and generally low hedgerows, provide a uniform appearance in the landscape, failing to break up vistas and allowing long distance visibility. Low vegetation fails to provide an ability to absorb development.* › *Land parcels are medium to large-sized and hedgerows are generally low and well-trimmed.* › *Occasional farmhouses and dispersed scattered housing can be found throughout the area.* › *Gently undulating topography is presented within the upland area of this character unit."*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 3 – Normal"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the middle of five sensitivity classes. The LACK notes that *"this area is generally perceived as special in landscape terms, however suitable for certain types of development".* As outlined in the Kilkenny WES, most of this LCA corresponds with land area classified as 'Acceptable in Principle,' with the next largest area classified as 'Open for Consideration'. The LACK notes that the central valley of Castlecomer Plateaux, including the upland enclosures, are perceived as suitable for general development, including wind energy developments. On balance, due to the landscape's regional importance, the sensitivity of this LCA to wind energy development is deemed to be **Medium**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	According to ZTV mapping, approx. one-quarter of the LCA has theoretical visibility. Most of this visibility within the upland area of the plateaux. Full visibility occurs closest to the Proposed Wind Farm site. Site visits in 2024 determined that only elevated vantage points will have views of the Proposed Turbines; viewpoints VP01 and VP02 are located in this LCA.
Cumulative Effects	1 no. Proposed wind energy development is located in this LCA: › Proposed Ballynalacken Wind Farm All 12 No. turbines of Ballynalacken are sited within this LCA, with the windfarm location being approximately 5.8km east of Proposed Development at its closest point. As shown by photomontages, the Ballynalacken turbines will be seen on the adjacent elevated hill across the Nore Valley from the Proposed Development

	within the LCA, thus some contribution to cumulative effects on the character of the landscape area is likely.
Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."*
Significance of Effect	**Medium × Slight = Minor/Negligible = "Not Significant" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*
Mitigation Factors	› Given the distance of the LCA from the proposed turbines, there will only be views of the proposed turbines from isolated elevated locations within this LCA. Where turbines of the Proposed Development will be visible, they will be viewed as small background elements. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › VP01 and VP02 show that Proposed turbines appear as a relatively small background feature within views when viewed from this LCA.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Not Significant" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.2.4 KK-LCA-B2: Castlecomer Western Transition Area

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

County Kilkenny LCA B2: Castlecomer Western Transition Area	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-B2
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located approximately 2.6km east of the nearest Proposed turbine (T7) and approximately 10.2km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	*'The western area is a long linear strip of land, running in a north-south direction, which is parallel to the River Nore Valley and close to the Dinin River. The area encompasses the environs of Ballyragget and Castlemarket areas'.* › *'These transitional areas are not perceived as having special landscape or scenic amenity values and are considered suitable for development'.* › *'Characterised by poor drainage, illustrated by the presence of bog rushes in certain areas'.* › *'Pasturelands present the main land use of the areas, with low and poorly maintained hedgerows: many of the roadside and field hedgerows are intertwined with briars'.* › *'Medium sized fields are a characteristic of this unit, which are commonly bounded by ash trees'.* › *'The population density of this area is low, with most settlement occurring within the established towns and villages, with some scattered rural housing'.* › *'This unit is characterised by smooth, sloping terrain, which allows vistas over long distances. In such terrain, development can have a disproportionate visual impact in some areas, due to an inherent inability to be absorbed, physically or visually'.* › *'The low-lying slopes of the Castlecomer Plateau fall within this landscape character area. Sloping land provides a potentially increased elevation intensifying visual prominence over greater distances. Slope often provides an area with its character and is therefore equally sensitive to development that might impact on that character'.*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 2 – Robust-Normal"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the second lowest of five sensitivity classes. As outlined in the Kilkenny WES, this LCA corresponds with land area classified as "Open for Consideration". In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be **Medium**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	According to ZTV mapping, there is almost full theoretical visibility of the LCAs area. Most of this visibility within this transitional area of the Castlecomer Plateaux. After site visits in 2024, it was determined that elevated vantage points within this LCA will have views of the Proposed Development. Photomontage viewpoints VP01 and VP02 located in K-LCA-B very close to the border with this LCA are representative of views from this LCA.
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.

RECEIVED: 04/07/2025

Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."*
Significance of Effect	**Medium × Slight = Minor = "Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*
Mitigation Factors	› Where visibility occurs, the Proposed turbines will be in the background of views, viewed as very small features within the landscape. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › The Proposed Development is sited in a sparsely populated area of the LCA which is highly modified by current land use such as agricultural uses. › As demonstrated by the photomontages, the Proposed Development is generally perceived as two linear, parallel arrays of turbines on the slightly elevated feature when viewed from the east of the LCA, in accordance with design guidance in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Not Significant" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*

1.2.5 KK-LCA-F1: Kilkenny Northern Basin

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

County Kilkenny LCA-F1: Kilkenny Northern Basin	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-F1
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	1 no. Proposed turbine (T7) is located within this LCA. At its furthest point, this LCA is located approximately 15km south-east of the turbine.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *'The terrain is generally smooth although undulating in certain areas, with vegetative/wooded slopes rising from the river valley'.* › *'Sub-area F1 has views of the River Nore Valley and both the Slieveardagh and Castlecomer Hills'.* › *'The area is perceived as being normal in landscape terms, with no special scenic or amenity values in general'.* › *'This low-lying area has open mountain views'.* › *'The predominant land uses being pastures (i.e. sheep grazing) and tillage'.* › *'The land parcels are regular in shape, with scrub hedgerows and intertwined hedgerow trees'.*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 3 – Normal"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the middle of five sensitivity classes. Areas classified under this sensitivity rating are described as being *"a common character type with a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments."* Additionally, this LCA is described as having *"no significant landscape value."* The sensitivity of this LCA as outlined in the LACK is low in comparison with other LCAs in the county. The Proposed Development is located in an area of the LCA corresponding to land area classified as 'Open to Consideration' in the Kilkenny WES. In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be **Low**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	According to ZTV mapping, approximately three-quarters of this LCA has theoretical visibility. Most of this visibility occurs in close proximity within 5km of the Proposed Turbines and to the N77 National Road. Although there is full theoretical visibility as far south as the townland of Dunmore, the N77 will in fact have no visibility as determined from site visits as there is visual screening from dense vegetation and the undulating topography. The furthest location to the south of this LCA with open views of the Proposed Turbines can be seen in photomontage VP13 in the Photomontage Booklet, where the Proposed Turbines appears as a very small feature above vegetation in the background of the image. VP04 and VP05 are also located in this LCA and in close proximity of the Proposed Development with open views.
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.
Magnitude of Change	**Moderate** *"A more limited loss of or change to landscape features over a medium extent which will result in some change to landscape features and aesthetics. Could include the addition of some new uncharacteristic features or elements that would lead to the potential for change in landscape character in a localised area or part of*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

	a landscape character area. Would include moderate effects on the overall landscape character that do not affect key characteristics."
Significance of Effect	**Low × Moderate = Minor = "Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*
Mitigation Factors	› Despite the widespread theoretical visibility indicated for this LCA, in reality, views towards the proposed turbines will be limited due to largely unmaintained hedgerows and vegetation. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › As demonstrated by the photomontages, the Proposed Development is generally perceived as two linear, parallel arrays of turbines on the slightly elevated feature when viewed from the east and south of the LCA, in accordance with design guidance in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Not Significant" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*

1.2.6 KK-LCA-H: Nore Valley (South)

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

County Kilkenny LCA-H: Nore Valley (South)	
Map Ref.	KK-LCA-H
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located approximately 1km east of the nearest Proposed turbine (T5) and approximately 15km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *'The Nore Valley is an extensive low-lying area';* › *'The terrain is undulating with vegetative/wooded slopes, rising from the river valley';* › *'This lowland unit, characterised by smooth terrain and low vegetation, has extensive open mountain views';* › *'The slopes of the Nore Valley conform to the general river valley pattern';* › *'Natural vegetation (i.e. native trees and shrubs) generally occurs on the floodplain slopes and riverbanks';* › *'Grassland is common on gentle slopes and floodplain levels';* › *'Some stretches of the valley have deciduous trees lining the slopes with a slow progression into pasturelands';* › *'The area is perceived as being scenic and special in landscape terms, particularly to the north of Kilkenny City.'*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a *"Class 5 – Sensitive"* sensitivity rating in the LACK, the highest of five sensitivity classes. In addition, as identified in Ch.14, this LCA corresponds to the designated 'Highly Scenic and Significant Visual Amenity Value' landscape area of Kilkenny, which includes other landscape areas outside the LCA Study Area; however, this designation does not pertain specifically to sensitivity to wind energy development. The LCA follows the path of the Nore River, which is easily accessible by road. Due to the low-lying nature of this area, many views of the river valley are available from the local roads and from viewing points located along the valley trail. The main concern for natural linear features such as this is to avoid visual intrusion by development, which will interrupt and reduce the integrity of the river valley. As outlined in the Kilkenny WES, this LCA corresponds with land area classified as "Not Normally Permissible". In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be **High**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	According to ZTV mapping, approx. three-quarters of the LCAs area has theoretical visibility. Most of this visibility occurs in close proximity to the Proposed Development and to the N77 National Road. Although there is full theoretical visibility as far south as the townland of Dunmore, the N77 will in fact have no visibility as determined from site visits where there is visual screening from dense vegetation and the undulating topography. The furthest location to the south of this LCA with open views of the Proposed Development can be seen in photomontage VP03 in the *Photomontage Booklet*, where the Proposed Development appears as a small background feature above vegetation. There will be limited visibility along riverbanks due to dense vegetation. VP03 shows the view from Ballyragget with the

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

	Proposed Development and the River Nore seen in conjunction, demonstrating the worst-case scenario of views from the LCA.
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.
Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."* Construction works relating to the installation of the underground grid connection may temporarily materially alter small portion of the LCA, but any altered landscape features will be restored long-term.
Significance of Effect	**High × Slight = Moderate/Minor = "Moderate" (EPA, 2022)** *'An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends'.*
Mitigation Factors	› Along the banks of the River Nore, there will be limited visibility of the Proposed Development due to visual screening from vegetation along the river banks. › Despite the widespread theoretical visibility indicated for this LCA, in reality, views towards the Proposed turbines will be largely limited due to unmaintained hedgerows and vegetation. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › As demonstrated by the photomontages, the Proposed Development is generally perceived as two linear, parallel arrays of turbines on the slightly elevated feature when viewed from the east and south of the LCA, in accordance with design guidance in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.3 County Laois

Assessment in this section was informed by landscape designations in the Laois County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021-2027 and the LCDP Appendix 6 forming the Landscape Character Assessment of the Co. Laois, as well as Appendix 5 of the LCDP forming the Co. Laois Wind Energy Strategy (hereafter, Laois WES).

1.3.1 L-LCA-1: Mountains, Hills and Uplands

County Laois LCA-1: Mountains, Hills and Uplands	
Map Ref.	L-LCA-1
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	The LCA occurs in two geographic areas within the LVIA Study Area, with the southern area containing 2 no. Proposed turbines (T1, T2) and the north-eastern area situated 5-15km away from the Site, thereby containing no Proposed turbines (refer to Figure 14-9 in the main chapter).
LCA Key Characteristics	› *'Hills and uplands lacking dramatic peaks.* › *There are panoramic views of lowland landscapes from these hills and uplands.* › *Important historic and archaeological features.* › *Extensive mono-type afforestation and marginal agricultural areas.'*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	In Table 11-6 in the LCDP 2021-2027, L-LCA-1 is divided into two sensitivity categories as follows based on the landscape types given in the LCA name. 'Hills and Uplands' are given a 'Medium' sensitivity with the capacity to accommodate *"a range of uses without adverse effects"* to local sensitivities, while 'Mountains' are assigned with High sensitivity and a reduced capacity. As the 2 no. Proposed turbines within Co. Laois are situated in the upland/hill setting of Seskin hill, the category of 'Hills and Uplands' is most appropriate. Therefore, L-LCA-1 is given a 'Medium' sensitivity rating, the middle of three sensitivity ratings assigned to LCAs within County Laois. The southern area of the LCA containing the Proposed turbines corresponds with land area considered as 'Not Open for Consideration' to wind energy development in the Laois WES and the north-eastern area corresponds with 'Open for Consideration', therefore it can be said that the LCA overall has a range of capacity for wind energy development. On balance, the sensitivity of L-LCA-1 to wind farm development is deemed to be **Medium**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	Within 5km, approximately half of the LCA has theoretical visibility. Beyond 5km there is very little theoretical visibility in the majority of the LCA due to visual screening by the topography. One area of mixed theoretical visibility occurs at 10km due to minor elevated landforms. The on-site visibility appraisal concluded that the greatest visibility of the proposed turbines is concentrated to the area in close proximity of the Site as vegetation and the undulating topography limit views of the wider landscape, especially in the west and north-east of the LCA containing T1 and T2. Photomontages VP08, VP09,

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

	VP11, VP14 and VP15 are located within this LCA along with three photowire viewpoints, PWVP-F, PWVP- G and PWVP-H.
Cumulative Effects	1 no. existing wind energy development is located in the north-eastern area of this LCA which does not contain turbines of the Proposed Development: › Permitted Pinewoods Wind Farm (11 turbines) All turbines of the permitted Pinewoods Wind Farm are located in the northeastern geographical area of the LCA, approximately 10km from the Proposed Development. Due to the great distance and the Pinewoods turbines being located well outside the Slieveardagh Hills area, the contribution to cumulative effects is deemed negligible.
Magnitude of Change	**Moderate** *"A more limited loss of or change to landscape features over a medium extent which will result in some change to landscape features and aesthetics. Could include the addition of some new uncharacteristic features or elements that would lead to the potential for change in landscape character in a localised area or part of a landscape character area. Would include moderate effects on the overall landscape character that do not affect key characteristics."*
Significance of Effect	**Medium × Moderate = Moderate/Minor = "Moderate" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends".*
Mitigation Factors	› Dense woodland and unmaintained hedgerows which are typical throughout this LCA and will substantially limit actual visibility of the proposed turbines within 5km of the Proposed turbines. › The turbine layout has been designed to create a coherent cluster of turbines, contiguous and connected to each other visually and with consistent spacing in line with the guidance for design and siting of wind farms within the 'Hilly and Flat Farmland Character Type' in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines. › As stated in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines, Hilly and Flat Farmland, where the Proposed Development will be located within this LCA, is not usually highly sensitive. › The proposed development is appropriately set-back from designated Protected Views and Scenic Routes and therefore will not give rise to significant effects on these designations within this LCA.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**"Slight" (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities."*

1.3.2 L-LCA-2: Lowland Agricultural Areas

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

County Laois LCA-2: Lowland Agricultural Areas	
Map Ref.	L-LCA-2
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	At its closest point, this LCA is located approximately 1.4km north of the nearest Proposed turbine (T1) and approximately 15km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *"Primarily comprises pastoral and tillage agriculture.* › *A flat open landscape with long-ranging views of the uplands.* › *Field patterns tend to be of a large scale and are bounded by deciduous hedgerows containing mature trees."*
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a "Low" sensitivity rating in Table 11-6 of the LCDP 2021-2027, the lowest of three sensitivity classes. The sensitivity of the L-LCA-2 to wind farm development is deemed to be **Low**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	Within 5km, approximately half of the LCA has theoretical visibility. Beyond 5km the majority of the LCA has full theoretical visibility. One area of mixed theoretical visibility occurs at 4km due to minor elevated landforms. Visibility appraisal concluded that the greatest visibility of the proposed turbines is concentrated within close proximity of the Site as vegetation and the undulating topography limit long-ranging views to the wider landscape, especially to the west and north of the LCA. VP10 and VP12 are located within this LCA along with three photowire viewpoints (PWVP-B, PWVP-C, and PWVP-E).
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.
Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."*
Significance of Effect	**Low × Slight = Minor/Negligible = 'Not Significant' (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*
Mitigation Factors	› Where visibility occurs, it will be in the background of views, as the Proposed turbines will be viewed as very small features within the landscape. › Dense woodland and largely unmaintained hedgerows which are typical throughout this LCA and will substantially limit actual visibility of the Proposed turbines within 5km. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › As demonstrated by the photomontages, the Proposed Development is generally perceived as two linear, parallel arrays of turbines on the slightly

	elevated feature when viewed from the east of the LCA, in accordance with design guidance in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**'Not Significant' (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

1.3.3 L-LCA-5: Urban Fringe Areas

County Laois LCA-5: Urban Fringe Areas	
Map Ref.	L-LCA-5
Distance from the site to Nearest/ Furthest Area of LCA	L-LCA-5 within the study area comprises three separate, relatively small urban areas; this assessment focuses on the Durrow area within 5km of the Site; see Section 14.4.5.3 of Chapter 14 for rationale. At the closest point, this LCA at Durrow is located approximately 1.5km north of the nearest Proposed turbine (T1) and approximately 3.3.km at its furthest point.
LCA Key Characteristics	› *"Complex landscape incorporating several elements within a rolling landform* › *Varied enclosures include hedgerows and significant amounts of trees."*
Landscape Sensitivity to a Wind Farm Development	This LCA is given a "Low" sensitivity rating in Table 11-6 in the LCDP 2021-27, the lowest of three sensitivity classes. The sensitivity of L-LCA-5 to wind farm development is deemed to be **Low**.
Visibility of the Proposed Development from within the LCA	The entirety of this LCA at the Durrow area is within 5km of the Site and the majority of the LCA has full theoretical visibility. Visibility appraisals concluded that the greatest visibility of the proposed turbines is concentrated to close proximity of the site (to the north and south of Durrow) as vegetation and the undulating topography limits long-ranging views to the wider landscape especially to the west and north of this LCA. Viewpoints 10 and 12 are representative of Durrow although are not located within this LCA along with one photowire viewpoints (PWVPs) (PWVP-I).
Cumulative Effects	No cumulative wind farms are located within this LCA.
Magnitude of Change	**Slight** *"The loss of or change to landscape features of limited extent, or changes to landscape character in smaller areas. Changes would not affect key characteristics. The addition of any new features or elements to the landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscapes. Changes to the landscape are more evident at a local level and not over a wide geographical area."*
Significance of Effect	**Low × Slight = Minor/Negligible = 'Not Significant' (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*
Mitigation Factors	› Where visibility occurs, it will be in the background of views, as the Proposed turbines will be viewed as very small features within the landscape. › Buildings within the settlement and mature vegetation, hedgerows and rolling-hill topography outside the settlement which are characteristic of this LCA at the Durrow area will substantially limit actual visibility of the proposed turbines within 5km of the proposed turbines. › The Proposed Development will not significantly impact upon any of the key scenic or landscape sensitivities of this LCA. › As demonstrated by the photomontages, the Proposed Development is generally perceived as two linear, parallel arrays of turbines on the slightly

	elevated feature when viewed from the east of the LCA, in accordance with design guidance in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and Draft 2019 Guidelines.
Residual Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	**'Not Significant' (EPA, 2022)** *"An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences."*

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

RECEIVED: 09/07/2025

APPENDIX 14-2

END OF DOCUMENT