11 Landscape and Visual

11.1 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was written by Geraldine Hayes of Hayes Ryan, Landscape Architects. The assessment is based on a desktop study and a field survey of the proposed site and receiving environment. These assessments were conducted on 4th, 10th and 24th February 2025 and again on the 5th March 2025. The viewpoints selected were also photographed on 7 and 10 March 2025, for verified photomontage. This report is to be read with the accompanying set of verified photomontages prepared by 3Dimensional in the accompanying verified photomontage booklet. Weather conditions were good with good visibility for the time of year. Deciduous trees had no leaf cover.

Although interlinked, the landscape impact and the visual impacts are assessed separately and with their own sets of criteria.

The landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA), concerns itself with landscape, landscape values, aesthetic and visual amenity and landscape as a resource which provides society with cultural, economic, and environmental benefits. Landscape has come to be defined according to the European Landscape Convention as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

The assessment is informed by EPA draft *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*[1] 2022 and the methodology prescribed in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition*, 2013 (GLVIA) published by the UK Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment.

The EPA sample guidelines analyse landscape from the visual and amenity perspective. Visual effects examine context, character of the view, significance and sensitivity with amenity regarding, public access, public amenities, recreation, and tourism. Landscape is studied under the headings; Landscape Appearance and Character, Landscape Context, Views, and Prospects (in the landscape character area and related areas), and Historical Landscapes. GLVIA guidelines examine landscape and visual effects in a necessarily interconnected manner. However, they are studied as separate study components.

11.1.1 Landscape

The effects on landscape are studied with Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as the guiding principle. This is concerned with the identification of and assessment of the importance of landscape characteristics, landscape quality and the condition of the landscape. According to the Guidelines for Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)[2], 'Landscape' results from the interplay between the physical, natural, and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations and spatial distribution of these elements create variations in landscape character. 'Landscape Character Assessment' is how landscape is described. It is the means by which we understand the effects of development on the landscape as a resource.

[1] https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/EIAR_Guidelines_2022_Web.pdf
[2] Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA)

The impact of the development itself is studied as the impact of the proposals and development on the landscape, whilst ‘effect’ describes the changes brought about by these impacts e.g., a change to landscape character.

11.1.2 Visual

The visual assessment aims to assess the extent of visibility of a development, define the sensitivity of receptors and set out the likely perception of viewers and visually sensitive receptors. This is largely to do with views and visual amenity. ‘Visual’ addresses the effects on specific viewpoints of the Proposed Development as it is experienced by general viewers and those inhabiting the local area. The effect on the views and general visual amenity is assessed. In short, visual assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views, the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on the area’s visual amenity.

11.2 Methodology

11.2.1 Baseline Information[3]

The baseline descriptions are required to consider the context of the landscape and views in terms of the proposed location, magnitude and spatial extent of landscape affected as well as current trends in that landscape/view.

Landscape Character Assessment and the character of the relevant views are described and checked against the local condition. The distinguishing characteristics of the landscape/view are examined.

The significance of the landscape or the view is assessed against current designations, significance of the landscape/view locally nationally or internationally. The quality of the landscape or the view is examined as are any legislative protections. The landscape/view is examined for its rarity, its ability to renew itself, uniqueness, and scenic qualities. The landscape/view is considered for its quality, value, designation, and any legislative protections connected to the landscape. The rarity/unique status and condition of the landscape is noted as is its ability to renew itself. Sensitivity relates to the sensitivity of the landscape or view to change.

Landscape assessment of potential landscape effects, involves assessing and classifying the sensitivity of the landscape as a resource and then describing and classifying the magnitude of landscape change which would result from the development. The combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change gives a classification for the significance of the landscape effects. The 'impact' of the development is the action which results in landscape and visual changes. 'Effect' refers to the changes brought about by such an impact. The effect may result in the alteration of the landscape character of the area. 'Effect' is defined as the change or changes resulting from those actions, e.g., a change in landscape character, or changes to the composition, character, and quality of views in the receiving environment. This report focusses on these effects. The study considers the area from which the development will be seen and the landscape it is set in. As per the GLVIA the emphasis is on a "reasonable approach which is proportional to the scale and nature of the Proposed Development."[4]

11.2.2 Thresholds of Magnitude of Change

A set of viewpoints were studied for the visual section of the report and a general landscape photographic study was conducted to examine and confirm the landscape character, its form and pattern around the Proposed Development.

The area around the site of the Proposed Development was examined and from this field study a specific set of viewpoints were selected for the visual aspect of the study. Professional judgement as recommended by the GLVIA and establishing a proportionate examination of the area relative to the size of the project has allowed for a thorough visual study.

Various tools, techniques and criteria are used to judge landscape capacity and sensitivity. Thresholds of magnitude of change are established by using such tools. In addition to

[3] EPA Table 3.3 Typical Standards of Descriptions of Baseline Data for use in an EIAR
[4] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment p 98

examining local Landscape Character Assessments (LCA), the field study was conducted to establish the magnitude of change to the landscape and views.

Assessment of “significance of landscape effects” requires a review of landscape character assessments at local level, establishing sensitivity against which any predicted change can then be measured. This involves a desk study review of published landscape characterisation studies and assessment of sensitivities for the case in hand.

Field observations are used to confirm decisions to assess landscape character and confirm landscape character against the desk top study. It is also used to assess the appropriateness of the landscape character type for this landscape.

Subjective information on less tangible characteristics is also recorded to inform the impressions or perceptions of the landscape and landscape value.

Ordnance Survey and other published information such as historical maps are also useful in examining the landscape, landscape history and its capacity for change.

The character, quality, scale, and value of the landscape is assessed according to the criteria below.

11.2.3 Landscape Quality

Landscape quality is primarily a matter of how clearly the distinctive character of a landscape is expressed in an area, and of the state of repair or condition of landscape elements and the integrity and intactness of the landscape. There are three categories of quality ranging from high to medium to low.

High – landscapes strong in character or distinctive character, in good condition and very few or no incongruous features. Excellent example of a landscape type.

Medium – moderate strength of character and retain many key characteristics. Such a landscape will typically have suffered some decline and is marked by the occasional incongruous feature.

Low – landscapes with weak strengths of character, fragmented and/or featuring significant atypical, incongruous, or discordant features.

11.2.4 Value

The value of a landscape reflects its value to society and in estimating this, the report sets out to establish levels of importance of the potentially affected landscape, aspects of the landscapes that are valued, to whom and for what reason. It refers to the relative value we attach to different landscapes and is the basis for designating or recognising certain highly valued landscapes. The reasons a landscape is valued are many and varied. It can include a landscapes’ scenic quality, its tranquillity, or its wilderness attributes. It may be highly valued at a national or local level due to conservation reasons or cultural associations.

Landscape value is categorised from high to medium to low.

‘**High**’ value landscapes covered by a national designation for landscape value and display a high number of locally valued features present or are very highly valued as a landscape for

other reasons.

'**Medium**' value landscapes are landscapes not covered by designation for landscape value. These landscapes may have a moderate number of locally valued features present, or they are moderately valued as a landscape for other reasons.

'**Low**' value landscapes are those not covered by a local or national designation for landscape with very few locally valued features present and not locally valued as a landscape for any other reason. A landscape with a low value may be degraded, display numerous incongruous features and have no obvious local association.

Landscape can also be seen to be valued at community level or for intangible reasons can be perceived to be valuable to a particular community. It may be valued for the elements that remain of a finely articulated landscape, with all its associations and connections over time.

11.2.5 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity refers to the degree to which a landscape can accommodate change without adverse effects on the landscape or its character. It has regard for the value placed on the landscape at all levels, how it is used, the patterns of the landscape, its sense of enclosure or openness and all of its visual receptors.

The nature and scale of development also reflects on sensitivity. Five categories are used to classify sensitivity.

Sensitivity Descriptions

Very High Areas: Where the landscape exhibits very strong, positive character with valued elements, features and characteristics that combine to give an experience of unity, richness, and harmony. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change in the form of development is very low. Because of their very high sensitivity these landscapes are subject to protection by designation either nationally or internationally. The priority for such landscapes is the protection of their existing characters from change.

High Areas: Where the landscape exhibits strong, positive character with valued elements, features, and characteristics. The landscape character has a limited or low capacity to accommodate change in the form of development. Such landscapes are recognised in landscape policy or designations as being of national, regional, or county value. The principal objective for the area is the conservation of existing landscape character.

Medium Areas: Where the landscape has certain valued elements, features, or characteristics but where the character is mixed or not particularly strong, or has evidence of alteration, degradation or erosion of elements and characteristics. The landscape character is such that there is some capacity for change in the form of development. These areas may be recognised in landscape policy at local or county level and the principal management objective may be to consolidate landscape character or facilitate appropriate, necessary change.

Low Areas: Where the landscape has few valued elements, features or characteristics and the character is weak. The character is such that it has capacity for change; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes are generally unrecognised in policy and the principal management objective may be to facilitate change through development, repair, restoration, or enhancement.

Negligible Areas: Where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features, or characteristics. The landscape character is such that its capacity to accommodate change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Such landscapes include derelict industrial lands or extraction sites, as well as sites or areas that are designated for a particular type of development. The principal management objective for the area is to facilitate change in the landscape through development, repair, or restoration.

Sensitivity of the landscape and susceptibility to change are interlinked. This is the ability of the landscape receptor (overall landscape character, landscape quality, condition of the landscape area etc.) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the baseline situation and /or the achievement of landscape policies and strategies. [5]

Existing assessments are very useful and largely deal with intrinsic or inherent sensitivity. This occurs without reference to a particular type of development. According to the GLVIA, "These cannot reliably inform assessment of the susceptibility to change since they are carried out without reference to any particular type of development and so do not relate to the specific development proposed."[6] Therefore susceptibility must be related to the project.

Relevant to this project, the site of the Proposed Development is sited in a **low** sensitivity landscape.

11.2.6 Geographical Extent

Having regard to the geographical extent of landscape effects, it is important to iterate the effects which may have an influence on differing scales at landscape level.

The effect at (a) site level will refer to the effect within the site itself and at (b) the level of the immediate setting of the site and (c) at the scale of the landscape type or character area. Some effects may have a geographical extent (d) ranging over several landscape character areas.

11.2.7 Loss/No Loss of Landscape Elements

In addition to effects which result in the loss of landscape elements, it is possible to have effects which cause no loss of landscape elements and no removal of existing components but there is an introduction of new elements e.g. buildings which alter the skyline or arise over the tree line. In such a case, scale can be seen to alter the landscape character and quality of visual amenity.

11.2.8 Magnitude of Landscape Change

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

5 GLVIA 3RD Ed., Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 p 89.
6 GLVIA 3RD Ed., Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 p 89

Description of the Categories of Landscape Change Magnitude

Very High: Change that is large in extent, resulting in the loss of or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered totally uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in fundamental change to the character of the landscape with a loss of landscape quality and perceived value.

High Change: Change that is moderate to large in extent, resulting in major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape and/or introduction of large elements considered uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape.

Medium Change: Change that is moderate in extent, resulting in partial loss or alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape but not necessarily reduction in landscape quality and perceived value.

Low Change: Change that is moderate or limited in scale, resulting in minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in minor change to the character of the landscape and no reduction in landscape quality and perceived value.

Negligible Change: Change that is limited in scale, resulting in no alteration to key elements features or characteristics of the landscape, and/or introduction of elements that are characteristic of the context. Such development results in no change to the landscape character, its quality or perceived value.

11.2.9 Probability of Effects

Likely or probable effects can be described as those which are planned to take place and those which can be reasonably foreseen to be inevitable consequences of the normal construction and operation of the project.

Thus, the probability of the effects is defined as likely and unlikely.

Likely Effects: The effects that can reasonably be expected to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.

Unlikely Effects: The effects that can reasonably be expected not to occur because of the planned project if all mitigation measures are properly implemented.

11.2.10 Significance of Effects

To classify the significance of effects, the magnitude of change is measured against the sensitivity of the landscape using the guide in Table 11.1 below. The matrix is only a guide. The assessor also uses professional judgement informed by their expertise and experience to arrive at a classification of significance that is reasonable and justifiable.

Table 11.1: Guide to Classification of Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

		Sensitivity: Landscape/View				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change: Landscape/View	Very High	Profound	Profound to Very Significant	Very Significant to Significant	Moderate	Slight
	High	Profound to Very Significant	Very Significant	Significant	Moderate to Slight	Slight to Not Significant
	Medium	Very Significant to Significant	Significant	Moderate	Slight	Not Significant
	Low	Moderate	Moderate to Slight	Slight	Not Significant	Imperceptible
	Negligible	Slight	Slight to Not Significant	Not Significant	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

According to EPA guidelines the description of the likely significant effects on both the landscape and visual receptors should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term, and long-term, permanent, and temporary, positive, and negative effects of the project.'

11.2.11 Duration of Effects

The duration of effect is categorised in this report according to the EPA guidelines[7].

- Momentary Effects: Effects lasting from seconds to minutes.
- Brief Effects: Effects lasting less than a day.
- Temporary Effects: Effects lasting less than a year.
- Short-term Effects: Effects lasting one to seven years.
- Medium-term Effects: Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.
- Long-term Effects: Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.
- Permanent Effects: Effects lasting over sixty years.
- Reversible Effects: Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration.
- Frequency of Effects: Describe how often the effect will occur. (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually).

11.2.12 Environmental Protection Agency Guidelines

The EPA Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, May 2022, describes the significance classifications as follows:

Imperceptible: An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.

[7] Environmental Protection Agency, 2022 Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports

Not significant: An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.

Slight: An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.

Moderate: An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.

Significant: An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.

Very Significant: An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration, or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.

Profound: An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

11.2.13 Methodology for Visual Effects Assessment

Assessment of visual effects involves identifying a number of key/representative viewpoints in the site's receiving environment, and for each one of these classifying the viewpoint sensitivity and the magnitude of change which would result in the view. These factors are combined to arrive at a classification of significance of the effects on each viewpoint.

11.2.13.1 Susceptibility of the Visual Receptor to Change

This depends on the occupation or activity of the people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the views or visual amenity they experience at that location. Visual receptors most susceptible to change include residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation focused on the landscape (e.g. trail users), and visitors to heritage or other attractions and places of community congregation where the setting contributes to the experience. Visual receptors less sensitive to change include travellers on road, rail and other transport routes (unless on recognised scenic routes), people engaged in outdoor recreation or sports where the surrounding landscape does not influence the experience, and people in their place of work or shopping where the setting does not influence their experience.

11.2.13.2 Value attached to the view.

This depends largely on the subjective opinion of the visual receptor but also on factors such as policy and designations (e.g. scenic routes, protected views), or the view or setting being associated with a heritage asset, visitor attraction or having some other cultural status (e.g. by appearing in arts). Five categories are used to classify a viewpoint's sensitivity.

11.2.13.3 Categories of Viewpoint Sensitivity

Very High: (views towards or from a landscape feature or area) that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of national value. The composition, character and quality of the view are such that its capacity for change is very low. The principal management objective for the view is its protection from change.

High: Viewpoints that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from

houses or tourist-based views focused on the landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating change may or may not be low. The principal management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity.

Medium: Views that may not have features or characteristics that are of particular value, but have no major detracting elements, and which thus provide some visual amenity. These views may have capacity for appropriate change and the principal management objective is to facilitate change to the composition that does not detract from visual amenity, or which enhances it. Such views can be judged to have some scenic quality, which demonstrates some sense of naturalness, tranquillity, or some rare element in the view.

Low: Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, and where the composition and character are such that there is capacity for change. This category also includes views experienced by people involved in activities with no particular focus on the landscape (e.g. shopping or they are on heavily trafficked routes). The view may make for an attractive backdrop but is not an important element for these activities. For such views, the principal management objective is to facilitate change that does not detract from visual amenity or enhances it.

Negligible: Views that have no valued feature or characteristic, or in which the composition may be unsightly (e.g. in derelict landscapes). For such views, the principal management objective is to facilitate change that repair, restores or enhances visual amenity. Such viewpoints reflect users whose activity has no focus on the landscape or where the view has no relevance to their activity. Such a view may be of poor quality.

11.2.14 Magnitude of Change to the View

Classification of the magnitude of change takes into account the size or scale of the intrusion of development into the view (relative to the other elements and features in the composition, i.e. its relative visual dominance), the degree to which it contrasts or integrates with the other elements and the general character of the view, and the way in which the change will be experienced (e.g. in full view, partial or peripheral view, or in glimpses). It also takes into account the geographical extent of the change, as well as the duration and reversibility of the visual effects. Five categories are used to classify magnitude of change to a view:

Categories of Visual Change - Magnitude of Change Description

Very High: Full or extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features or characteristics, or introduction of elements that are completely out of character in the context, to the extent that the development becomes dominant in the composition and defines the character of the view and the visual amenity.

High: Extensive intrusion of the development in the view, or partial intrusion that obstructs valued features, or introduction of elements that may be considered uncharacteristic in the context, to the extent that the development becomes co-dominant with other elements in the composition and affects the character of the view and the visual amenity.

Medium: Partial intrusion of the development in the view, or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not necessarily uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in change to the composition but not necessarily the character of the view or the visual amenity

Low: Minor intrusion of the development into the view or introduction of elements that are uncharacteristic in the context, resulting in minor alteration to the composition and character of the view but no change in visual amenity.

Negligible: Barely discernible intrusion of the development into the view, or introduction of elements that are characteristic in the context, resulting in slight change to the composition of the view and no change in visual amenity.

11.2.15 Significance of Visual Effects

As for landscape effects, to classify the significance of visual effects, the magnitude of change to the view is measured against the sensitivity of the viewpoint, using the guide in Table 11.1 above.

11.2.16 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures for both landscape and visual effects are categorised as;

- **Mitigation by Avoidance**
- **Mitigation by Prevention** e.g. Prevention measures are put in place to prevent the effects of accidental events from giving rise to significant adverse effects.
- **Mitigation by Reduction**; seeks to limit the exposure of the receptor.
- **Reducing the Effect**; This strategy is used for effects which occur over an extensive and undefined area of land view or landscape. The mitigation is often achieved by installing screening between the likely receptors and the source of the effects.
- **Offsetting**: This is a strategy used for dealing with significant adverse effects which cannot be avoided, prevented, or reduced. It includes measures to compensate for adverse effects. e.g. planting of new vegetation elsewhere to replace unavoidable loss of similar vegetation.

11.3 Baseline Conditions

11.3.1 Ordnance Survey Ireland Historical Maps

The following historical maps from Tailte Éireann; (the OSI historical six inch black and white and coloured (first editions), as well as the six inch black and white last edition and twenty-five inch black and white maps) (**Figure 11.1- 11.4**) were studied to identify the evolution of the landscape in and around the proposed site and to examine it in the context of the landscape and landscape character area as we find it today. The modern townland boundary concurs with the historical townland boundary of Ballyvass or Baile an Bhasaigh. The proposed development does not affect the townland boundaries.

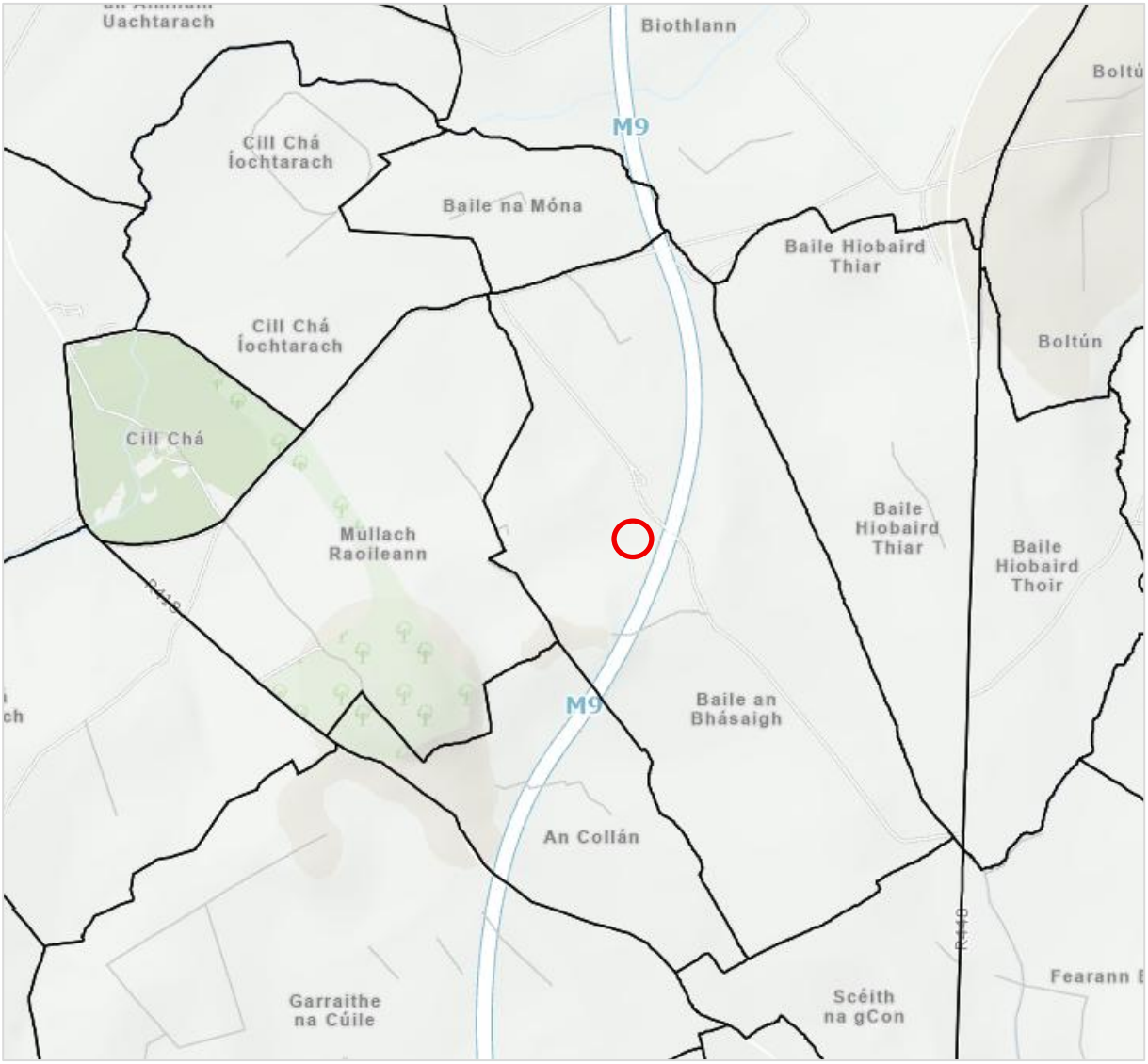
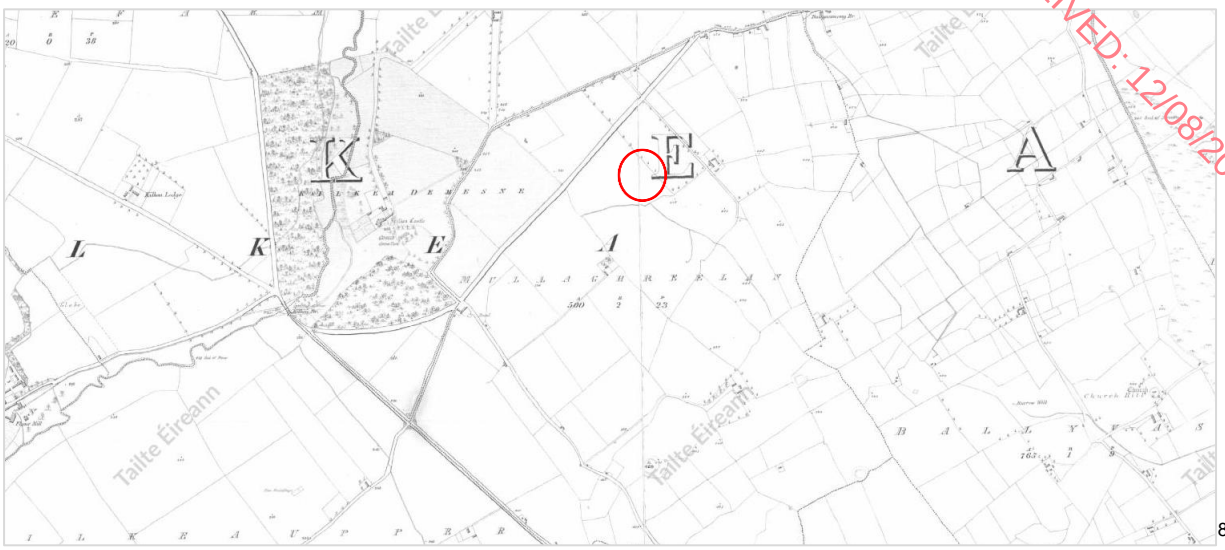


Figure 11.1: Townland Boundary



[8]

Figure11.2: OSI Historic Map 6-inch first edition black and white

The spatial construct of the historical landscape aligns with the contemporary however the latter is not as finely articulated. This is the situation both at the landscape scale and at a local scale surrounding the site of the proposed development. The field system is now composed of larger fields which are arable and pastural though the former is more pronounced in this landscape. The field outline generally follows the outline of previous smaller field patterns. The underlying topography is closely aligned with indicated places of historical significance at a local level. The rath at Mullaghreelan Wood is the centre of the relationship with threads of connection along the levels as the landscape descends.

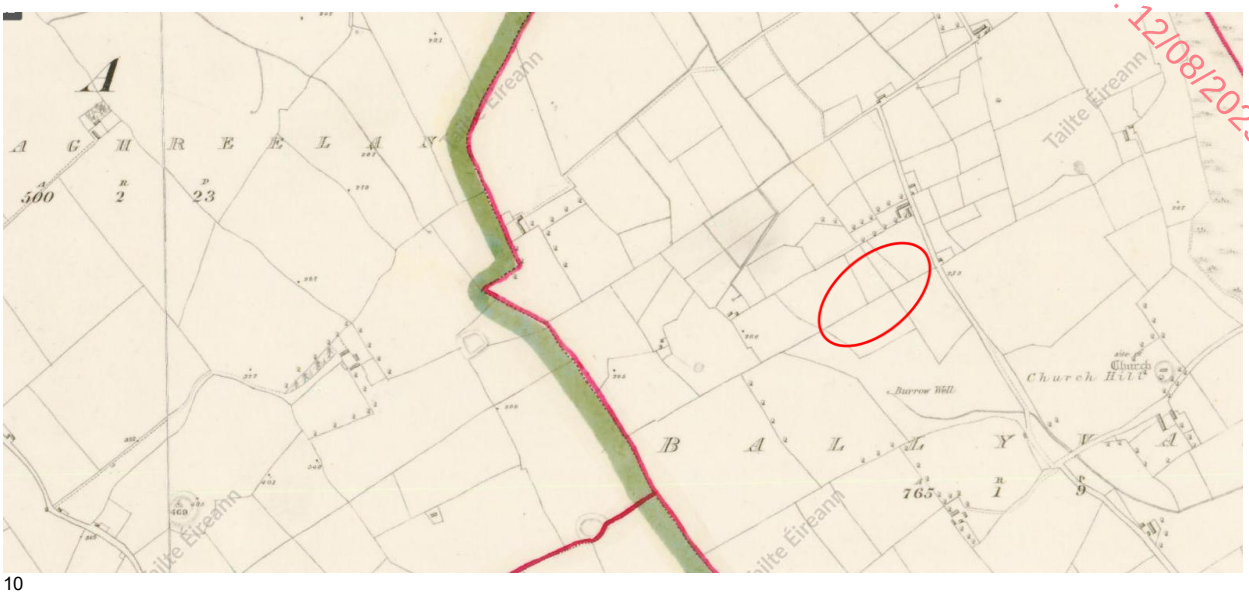
[9]

Figure11.3: OSI Historic Map 6-inch first edition black and white overlay Tailte Éireann

When examining the historical maps overlain onto the contemporary landscape, the infrastructure of the motorway now dominates. Church Hill and Burrow Well now lie on one side of the motorway whilst Burrow Hill on the other no longer plays a role in this landscape

[8]Tailte Éireann Six Inch Black and White First Edition
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html
[9] Tailte Éireann Black and White Six Inch First Edition OSI Overlay

relationship due to severance and nearby quarrying activity.



[10]

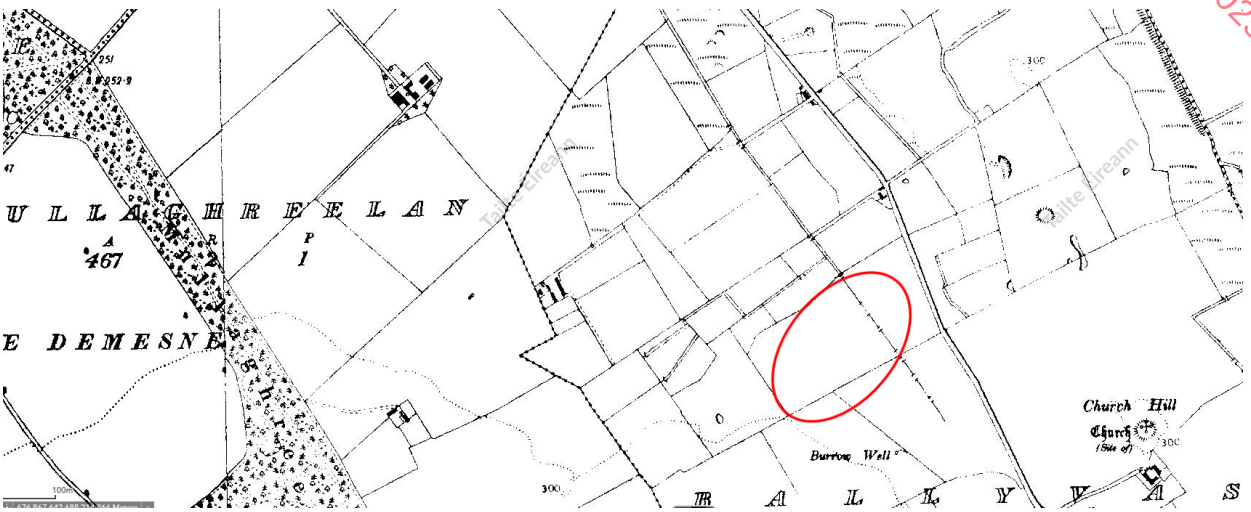
Figure11.4: OSI Historic Map 6-inch colour first edition (1837-1842)

This is confirmed by examining the landscape as portrayed on the six-inch first edition colour maps.

[11] **Figure 11.5: OSI Historic Map 6-inch colour first edition (1837-1842)**

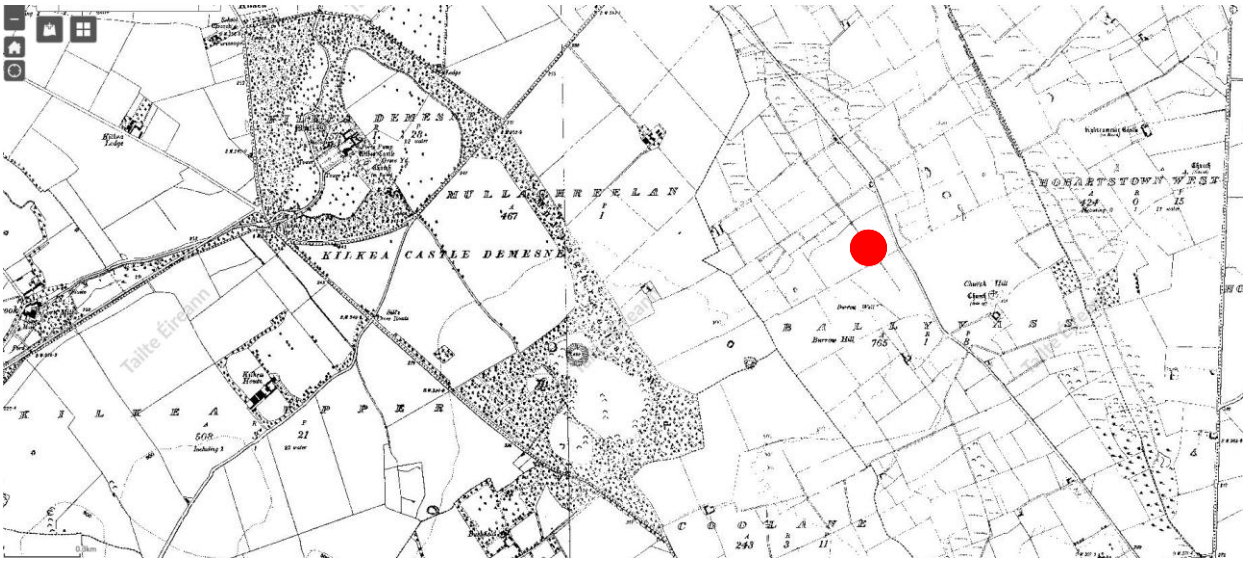
[10] Tailte Éireann Colour Six Inch First Edition OSI
[11] Tailte Éireann Colour Six Inch First Edition OSI Overlay

This is also the case for the more detailed and informative OSI six inch black and white last edition maps. The relationship between the topography, Mullaghreelan Rath and Woods, Church Hill and Burrow Hill and Well was apparent. The motorway greatly decreases the spatial interconnection at landscape level.



[12]**Figure 11.6: OSI Historic Map 6-inch last edition black and white**

The site of the proposed development sits lower in the topography from other local icons. The motorway, its bridges and overpasses further seclude the site in the contemporary landscape.



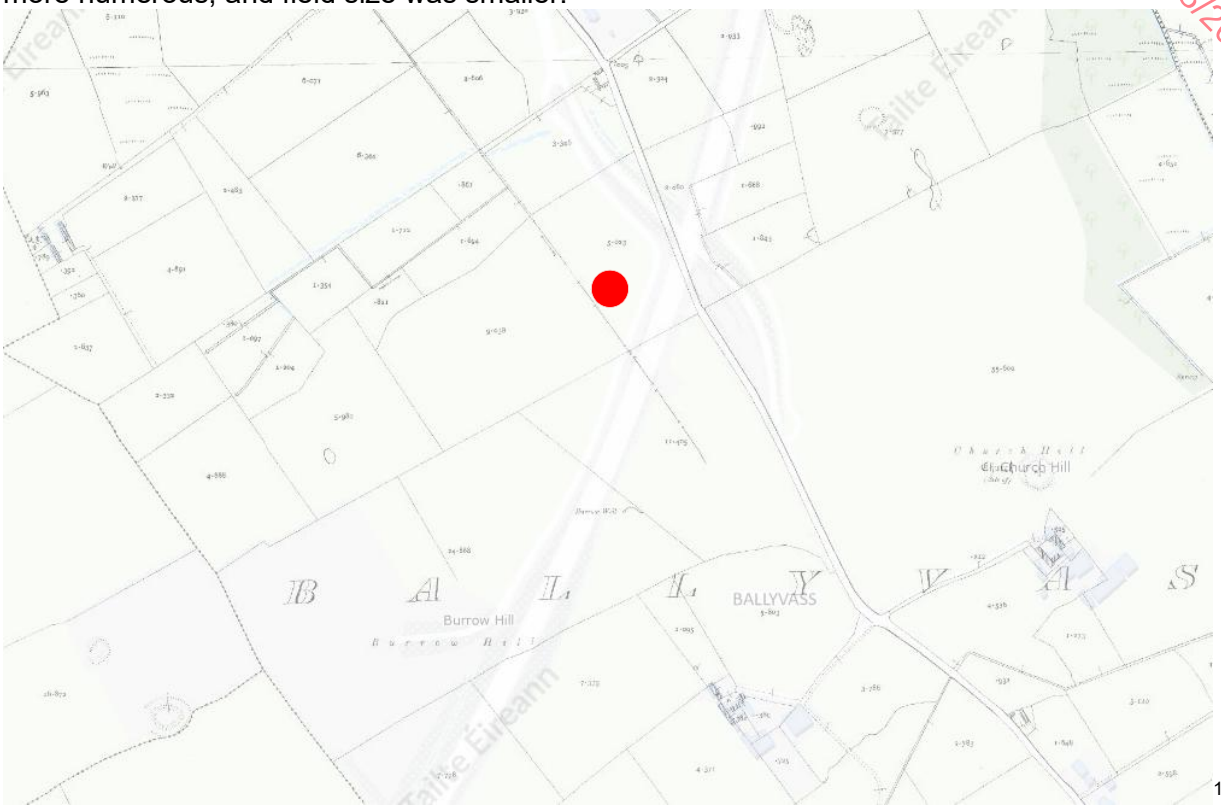
[13] **Figure 11.7: OSI Historic Map 6-inch last edition black and white**

The last edition black and white six-inch OSI maps show the landscape around Ballyvass and

[12]Tailte Eireann OSI 6 Inch Black and White last edition
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

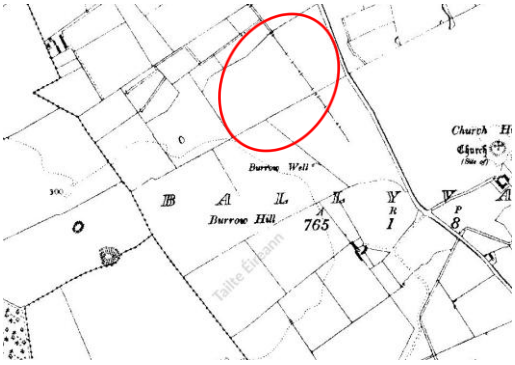
[13] Tailte Eireann OSI 6 Inch Black and White last edition
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

Kilkea Demesne with the best spatial integrity. There is an intentional designed landscape evident which respects the position and location of Mullaghreelan Rath within the woods. Around the site of the proposed development, drainage patterns and field boundaries were more numerous, and field size was smaller.



[14]

Figure 11.8: Tailte Eireann OSI Historic Map Genie 25-inch overlay

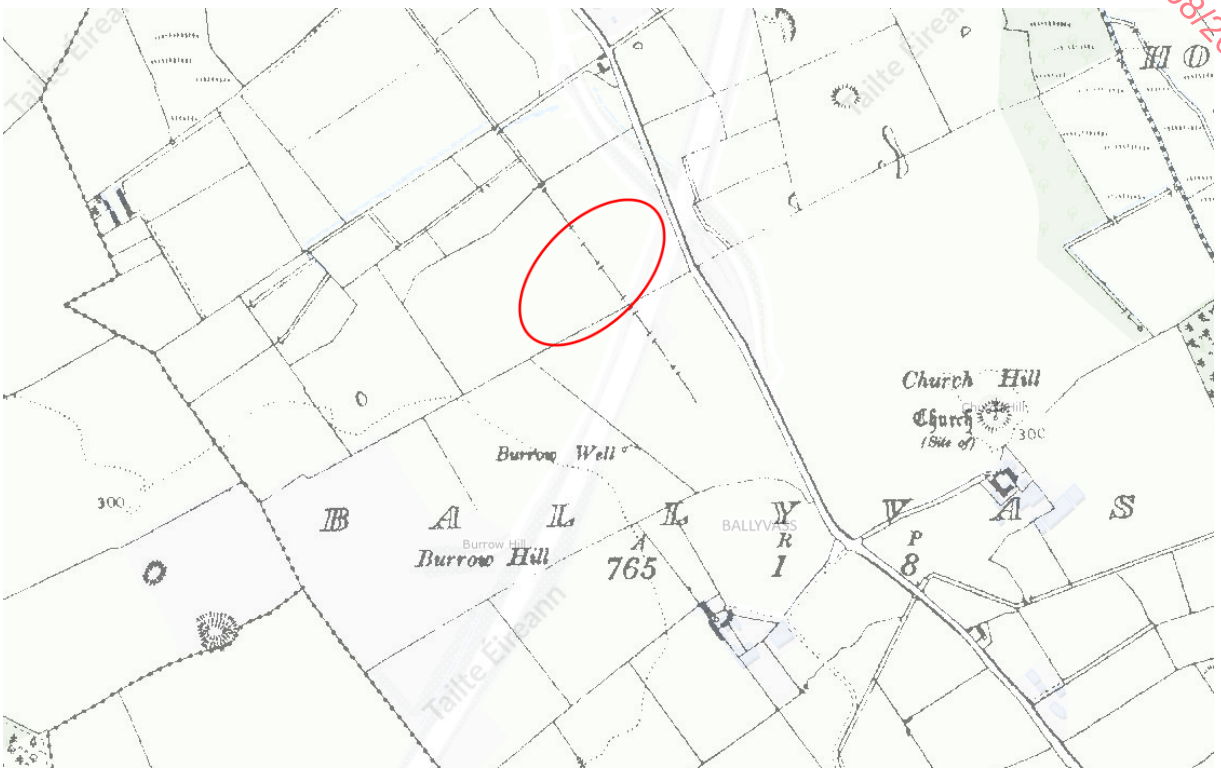


[16]

[15]

[14] Tailte Éireann OSI
[15] Tailte Éireann Digital Global https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html
[16]OSI (Tailte Éireann) Six Inch Last Edition Black and White https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

Figure 11.9, 11.10 (above) and 11.11 (below): Tailte Eireann OSI Historic Map, Digital Global Map and Map Genie 25 inch overlain. Comparing and tracing the evolution of the landscape to the current spatial pattern in relation to local landscape iconography, topography, and field size.



11.3.2 Landscape Associations

There are records pertaining to Ballyvass going back to the ecclesiastical taxation of Ireland 1302 and at every significant historical record eg 1530 Capella de la Villa Heyly Was[17] to 1837 Baile Uas i.e. Wese's town where Wes is a family name in English. It appears this describes the townland name more than Baile an Bhásaigh. There are no obvious records of deaths, battles or executions pertaining to the area.

Given the long historical associations with the area, the national monuments and records of protected structures are considered here under landscape associations.

Mullaghreelan Wood is a picturesque old woodland in the Coillte estate. The wood adjoins Kilkea Castle (and would originally have comprised part of the castle and landscape), which was built in 1180 AD by Hugh de Lacey for Walter de Riddlesford after the invasion of Ireland by Strongbow. Kilkea was also the birthplace of St. Laurence O' Toole who was Archbishop of Dublin in the 12th century. The wood encircles a hilltop rath which is associated with the kings of Leinster in ancient Irish manuscripts. There are numerous archaeological features indicated in the local landscape. As mentioned, Church Hill, Burrow Hill, and Burrow Well feature on the original Ordnance Survey maps. The original site of Burrow Well is now on the opposite side of the motorway to the proposed site.

[17] https://www.logainm.ie/en/24961

[18]

Figure 11.12: Burrow Well

The landscape surrounding the site is rich in archaeological finds and features. This is usually indicative of a rich historical association between the elements and the landscape. There are none listed on the site of the proposed development with the exception of a fulachta fia excavation. Previously working for Bord Gáis infrastructure, this fulachta fia was excavated.[19]

[18] Historic Wells 1830's https://osi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

[19]Gregory N. 1999 Results of an archaeological excavation of a fulacht fia site in advance of Bord Gáis Eireann pipeline extension at Ballyvass, Co. Kildare. Licence No. 99E0453. Margaret Gowan & Co. Ltd.

Figure 11.13: Tailte Éireann 25-inch map Archaeological Elements in the Landscape

[20]National Monuments Service Sites and Records Archaeological Survey of Ireland https://www.geohive.ie/datasets/9114e77582204e62907c5c29d3f06154_0/explore

21

Figure 11.14: NIAH Record of Protected Structures Local Locations

There are no listed buildings affected by or in view of the proposed development. Given the location of the M9 motorway and the sand and gravel quarry in relation to the site of the proposed development and the absence of listed elements at the site, incongruity is not an issue in the case of landscape associations.

11.3.3 Monuments and Protected Structures

The National Inventory of Architecture and the local Record of Protected structures are considered as part of this report. The interaction of archaeology and landscape is considered in this report as an element of landscape. There are no recorded monuments or protected structures on the site of the proposed development that have any landscape implications. A previous excavation revealed a Fulachta Fia during nearby work for Gas Networks Ireland.

The ring fort at Mullaghreenan Woods to the west is considered in the visual section of this report.

There are no historical landscapes designated at the site of the proposed development. The

[21] Record of Protected Structures NIAH Buildings
https://www.geohive.ie/datasets/1845c6f41a11462ba1926f29566818ce_0/explore

records of protected structures and monuments (Fig 11.3. and Fig 11.4 above) show there will be no effect from the proposed development on any of the buildings or monuments listed. The visual section of this report examines intervisibility.

11.3.4 County Kildare Development Plan LCA, Landscape Character Area

The landscape character assessment included in the Kildare County Council development plan 2023-2029 (LCA KCDP 2023-2029) has been subsumed from the previous KCDP. Landscape Character Areas are areas that generally share the same characteristics. This typological classification of the county's' landscapes into categories has placed the site of the Proposed Development into the **Eastern Transition** landscape character area.

Within each area there is a further classification described as "Minor or very small distinctive features that arise from localised topographic circumstances are outcrops, rivers, bogs, fens which are mapped" … "as Subordinate Landscape Areas." The authors of the assessment indicated that it "is important to note that within each of these areas there can be a wide variety of local conditions that can significantly increase or decrease sensitivity……. This is determined by examining the presence/absence or dominance of sensitivity factors within each area by using landscape sensitivity." As listed in Table 13.4 of the LCA, the capacity of the landscape to absorb each of the sensitivities is indicated. The local sensitivities relevant to the site of the Proposed Development are the hilltop view at Corballis, the driving route surrounding the hill, the ridge line at Mullaghreelan Wood and the mixed woodland at Mullaghreelan. Scenic routes, views and ridgelines are compatible only in exceptional circumstances with industrial projects for proximity within 300m of these principal landscape sensitivity factors.

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

Figure 11.15 Likely compatibility between sensitivity factors and selected development types KCDP LCA

The distance from the site boundary to the closest landscape sensitivity elements are as follows;

- Distance from proposed site boundary to Mullaghreelan woodland edge is 0.74 - 0.75km
- Distance from proposed site boundary to the ridge at Mullaghreelan Rath 0.98km – 1.0km
- Distance from proposed site boundary to Corballis Hilltop 5.5km
- Approximate distances Corballis scenic drive 2km- 6 km

11.3.5 Landscape Areas of High Amenity

The landscape character assessment policy objectives and KCDP policy objectives have identified “Areas of High Amenity” in addition to “Landscape Character Areas and the sensitivity of these areas to development, there are certain special landscape areas within the county, some of which overlap with sensitive landscapes.” They are classified because of their “outstanding natural beauty and/or unique interest value and are generally sensitive to the impacts of development.” These areas of high amenity include;

Dun Ailinne, The Curragh and Environs, Pollardstown Fen, The River Liffey and the River Barrow Valleys, Rye Water Valley at Carton SAC, The Grand and Royal Canal Corridors, Ballynafagh Lake SAC, Poulaphuca, Mouds Bog SAC, Ballynafagh Bog SAC, Red Bog SAC, East Kildare Uplands.

None of these landscapes will be affected by the proposed development either at landscape scale or due to intervisibility.

11.3.6 Landscape Character

The landscape type of the character area was investigated at a local level in the field survey. The findings of the field survey (**See Appendix 11.2**) concur with the description of landscape character as a transition zone between the higher ground of the eastern uplands and the southern lowlands. The M9 motorway infrastructure influences the character of the landscape in this character area. The curvature of the motorway alignment, the motorway bridges, and the topography in and around the motorway act in sheltering the site of the Proposed Development from the surrounding area. (Figure 11.45 Appendix 11.1 TII LiDAR includes the site of the proposed development in relation to topography and the motorway).

There are large agricultural units and modern single housing in the landscape character area. Locally, there is one large agro-industrial unit in the landscape as well as sand and gravel extraction operations. Tranquillity in this landscape character area is low and there is no sense of remoteness at the site of the proposed development given its location adjacent to busy motorway infrastructure. However, there is a good sense of the rural Irish landscape in the character area and a contrast between the uplands and the mountainous terrain to the east and the lower lying ground with intermittent hilly changes in elevation. The field system, its shape, structure, and pattern provides a typical landscape mosaic with contrast between arable units and pastoral areas. Mullaghreelan Wood, close to the site of the Proposed Development contrasts in woodland and topography with the lower lying proposed site and surrounding fields. This woodland is mixed and includes broad leaved species as well as commercial forestry coniferous material and a stand of tall redwoods. A sand and gravel extraction quarry next to the Proposed Development is well integrated into the overall landscape and is indicative

of the nature of the landscape character where development in the landscape is accompanied with good siting and integration.

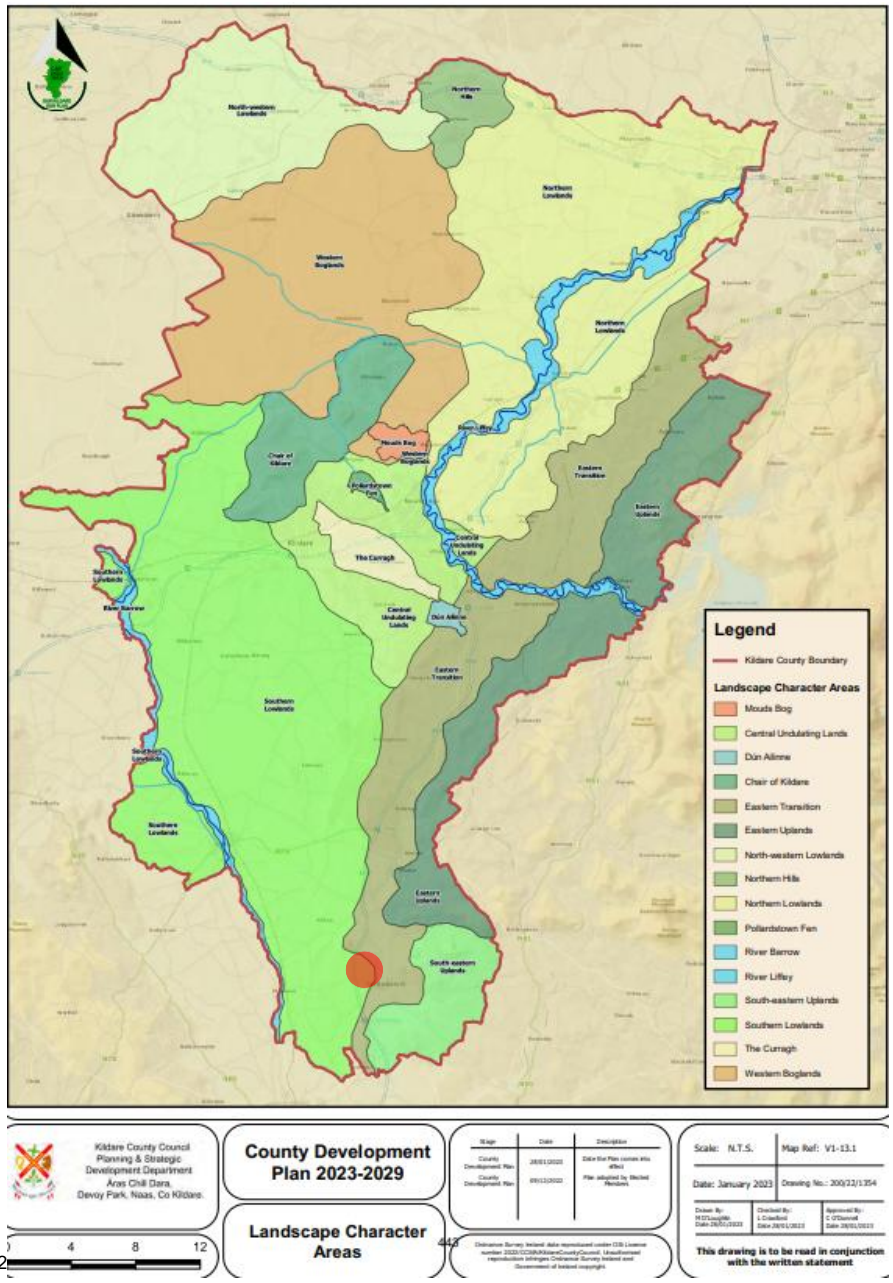
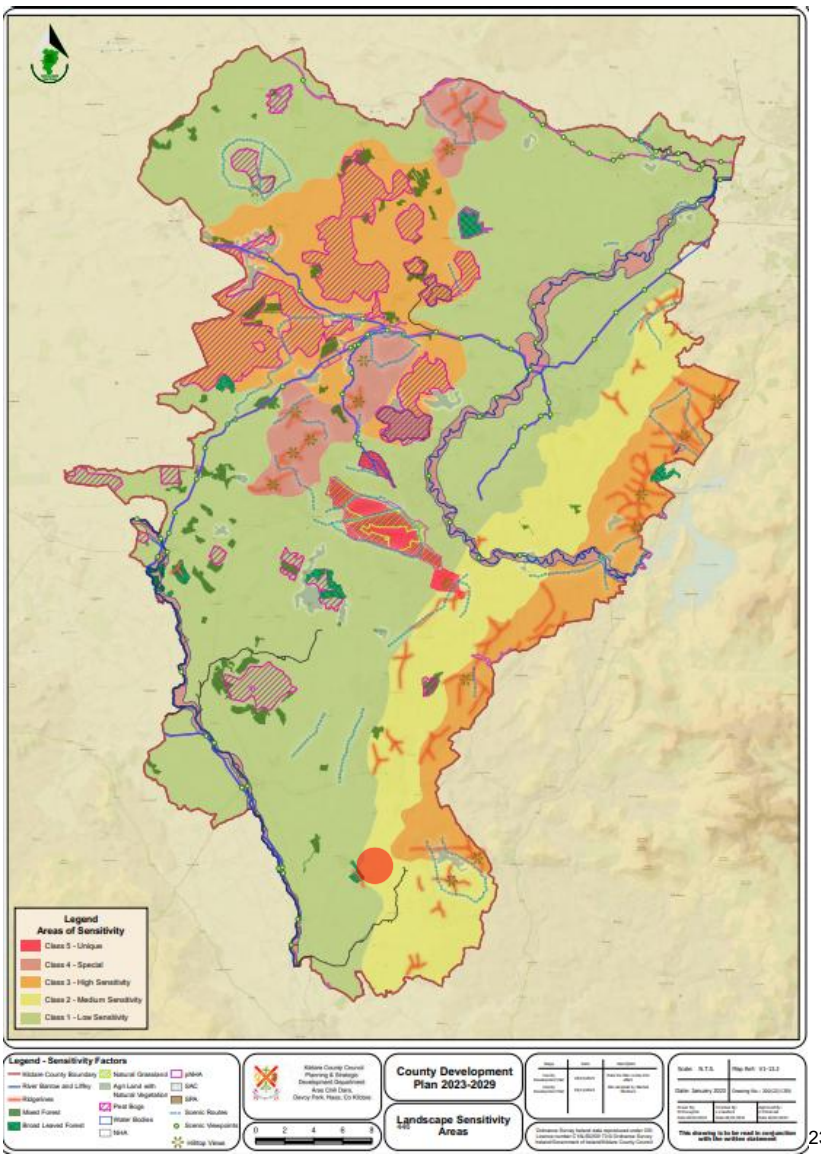


Figure 11.16: Kildare Landscape Character Areas KCDP 2023-2029 - Location of the Proposed Development

[22] Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 Landscape Character Areas

11.3.7 Landscape Sensitivity



[23]

Figure 11.17: The Eastern Transition Zone (medium sensitivity). Location of the Proposed Development

The landscape character area 'Eastern Transition' zone has been assigned a '**medium'** sensitivity rating in the landscape character assessment for County Kildare. This is described as; "Class 2 Medium Sensitivity Eastern Transition Lands South- Eastern Uplands Areas with the capacity to accommodate a range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the landscape having regards to localised sensitivity factors." [24]

The localised sensitivity factors in this case are the historic nature of the local landscape, Mullaghreelan Wood and Kilkee Castle Estate. There will be no direct effect on these

[23]https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/KildareCountyDevelopmentPlan2023-2029/Volume1Chapters1-17/Chapter%2013.%20Landscape%20Recreation%20%20Amenity.pdf
[24]https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/KildareCountyDevelopmentPlan2023-2029/Volume1Chapters1-17/Chapter Landscape, Recreation and Amenity.pdf

landscape sensitivities due to the Proposed Development. The development will be enveloped in the existing field boundary and there will be no disruption of the existing field pattern. The development and growth of native trees and landscape amelioration proposals will in time generate the sense of a new woodland surrounding the facility. This will blend with the existing woodland which will be in no way incongruent in this landscape setting. The form and shape of the proposals will differ from other large existing units in the landscape, but the scale will not be out of character with other units in this landscape character area.

11.3.8 Landscape Value

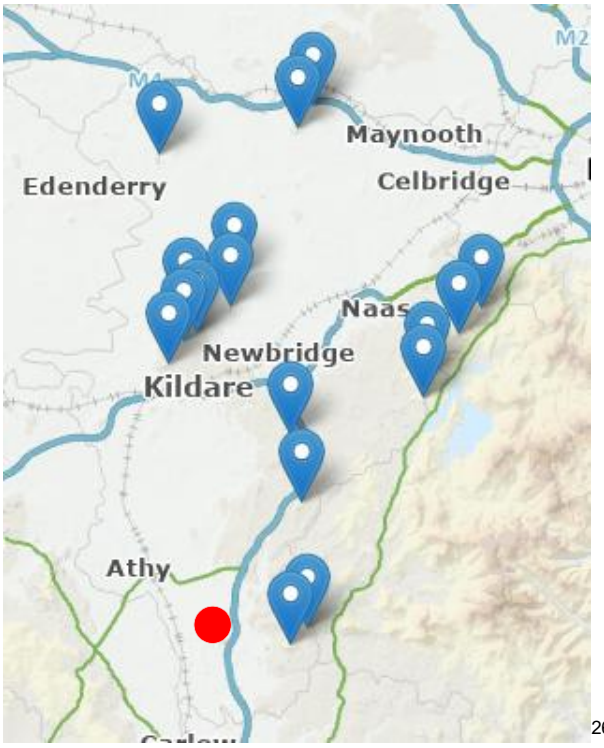
There is no strong landscape value attributed to the character area in the current KCDP. The hedgerow system is a most valued element in its ability to define the landscape spatial pattern and locally its position on the edge of an interesting historical area lend these elements most value in the landscape setting.

11.3.9 Views and Prospects

"The Council recognises the need to protect the character of the county by protecting views and scenic routes. However, it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances, some development may be necessary. In this regard, appropriate location, siting, and design criteria should strictly apply"[25].

The designated amenity views and prospects in County Kildare will /not be affected by the proposed development. The closest hilltop view is Corballis Hill at over 5km from the proposed development. Nevertheless, careful design and siting and continuous adjustment as part of the iterative design process has contributed to siting the proposed facility as well as possible.

[25]KCDP 2023-2029 Chapter 13 Landscape and Amenity
https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/KildareCountyDevelopmentPlan2023-2029



[26]

Figure 11.18 Listed Hilltop Views KCDP 2023-2029

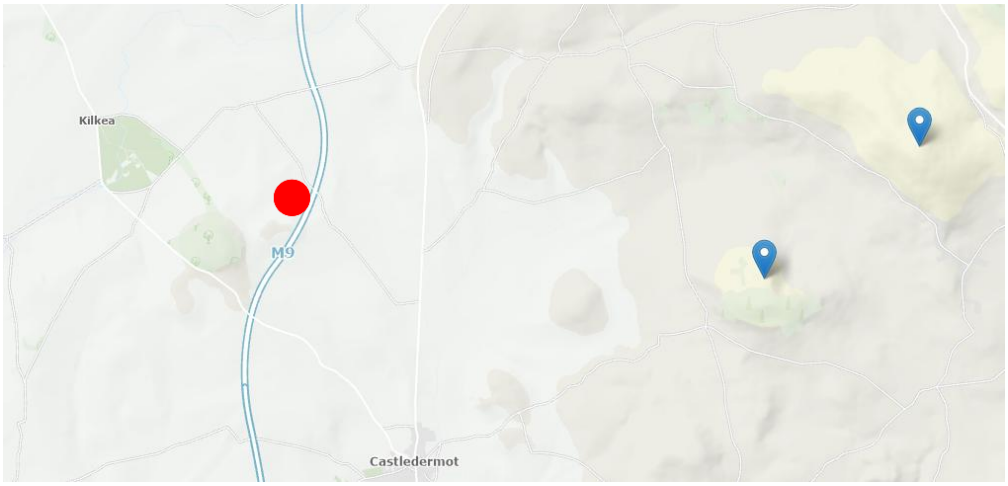


Figure 11.19 Listed Hilltop Views Corballis and Hughestown Hill Views KCDP 2023-2029

[26] https://data.gov.ie/dataset/kildare-hilltop-views-23-29

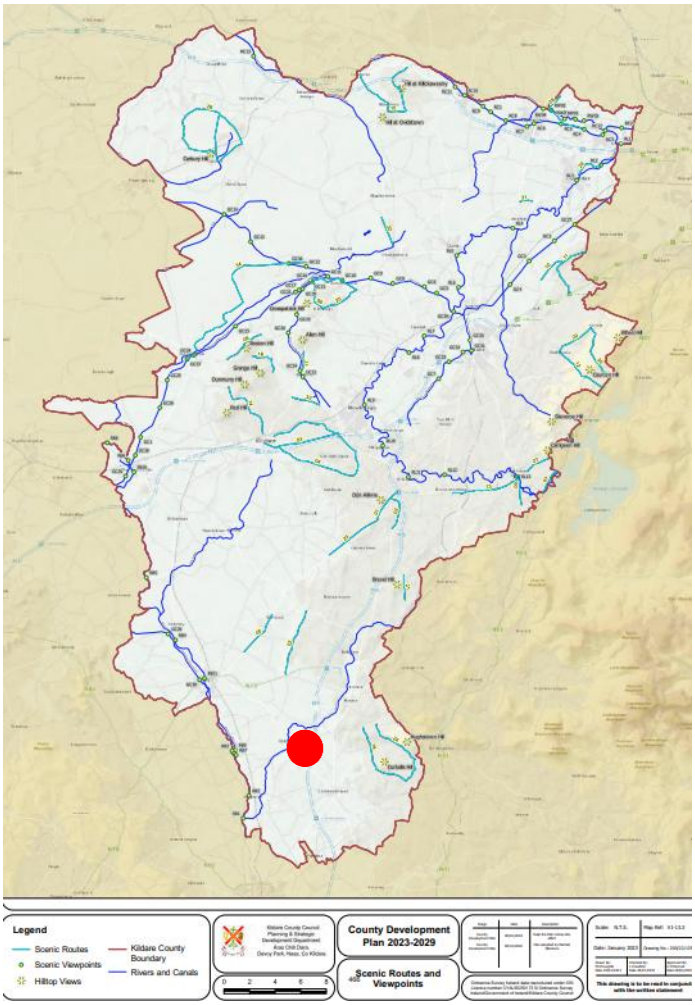


Figure 11.20 Listed Scenic Routes, Scenic viewpoints, and Hilltop Views

The scenic prospects as listed in the KCDP were examined (**Figure 11.20**) in relation to the Proposed Development. There are no listed prospects in the proximity of or focused on the proposed development site. As discussed above the Corballis scenic drive is the closest prospect to the site of the proposed development and is approximately 2km- 6 km on the nearest side to the proposed development.

The views listed by Coillte in Mullaghreelan Wood were examined (**Figure 11.21**). They focus north towards Kilkea Castle and west over the plain of Kildare towards Laois. These are not in the direction of the proposed development. The visual section of the report below examines this further.

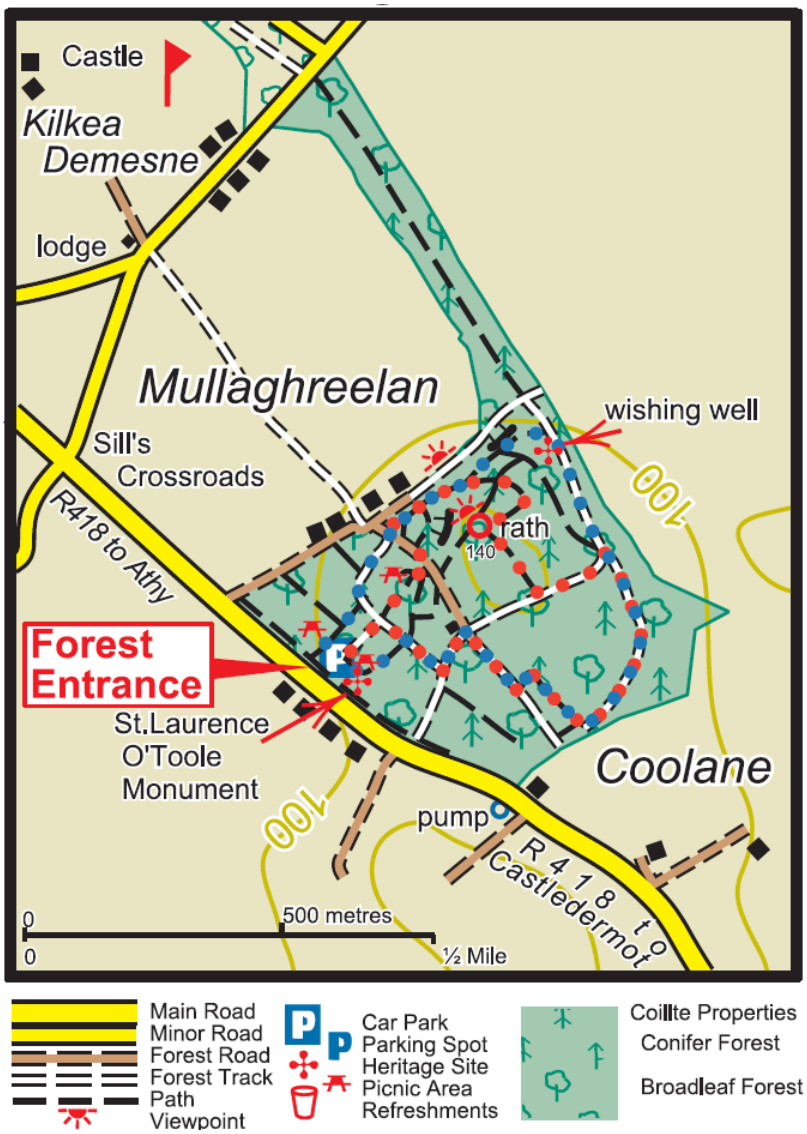


Figure 11.21 Walking Trails and viewing points Mullaghreelan Woods

11.3.10 Geological Heritage

Examining the Kildare County Development plan and Geological Survey Ireland, there are no listed areas of geological heritage interest affected by the proposed development from a landscape or intervisibility perspective.

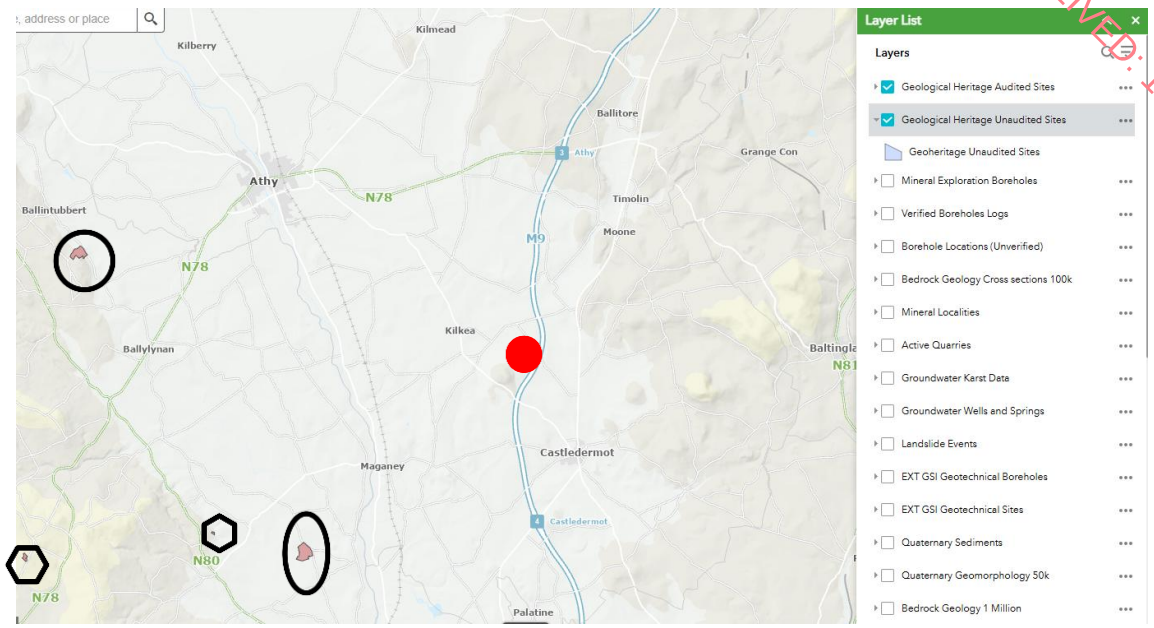


Figure 11.22 Geological Heritage Sites (closest)

11.3.11 Recreation and Tourism

Kilkea Castle Estate offers accommodation, spa, golf, dining, and tourism experiences from the historic castle. It is particularly important in the south Kildare tourism offering. Mullaghreelan Wood is connected to Kilkea demesne.

The views from Mullaghreelan Rath would have originally overlooked Kilkea Castle and still offers excellent views through the trees westward over the rolling landscape of east Laois. Mullaghreelan is a mixed woodland with a good network of trails and is of historical interest. A nature/heritage trail has been put in place with ten stops of interest along the route.

The wood is an old woodland site which is popular all year long but especially in spring with a great display of bluebells when they come out. There is a rare stand of coastal sequoia redwood in Mullaghreelan.

11.3.12 Cycling, Walking and Driving Routes

There are no other looped trails, long distance driving or cycling routes in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Current blue way and greenway developments along the canal and River Barrow network will not be affected by the proposals.

The walk at Mullaghreelan Wood is a network of forest roads and trails. Two of these trails are waymarked. The Rath Walk (2kms, 45mins,) is through the forest up through the beech lined avenue and to the rath. The O'Tuathaill Walk (2kms, 45mins) runs to the Northeast of the forest.[27]

[27] https://www.coillte.ie/site/mullaghreelan-wood/

[28]

Figure 11.23 Sports Ireland Mullaghreelan Trails

Sports Irelands national trail office also lists the woodland trails at Mullaghreelan.

The KCDP 2023-2029 includes objective;

“LR O42 - Lead and support the extension and interconnection of Greenways, Blueway’s, Peatways and trails within and outside County Kildare in consultation with Coillte, Bord na Móna and all other relevant stakeholders.”

It is also the intention of the Council to oversee:

“The *creation of a successful community-led tourism destination supported by Kildare County Council, Failte Ireland and other stakeholders following the Blueway and encompassing peatland areas to the west as part of a National Peatlands Park has the potential to offer the visitor a unique experience to get “lost in wilderness” in a relaxed environment away from urban life. The Council recognises that the development of a range of outdoor activities based around our natural amenities of bogs, canals and rivers and the discovery of the area’s natural and built heritage would significantly support the future growth of tourism in Kildare and the midlands.”*

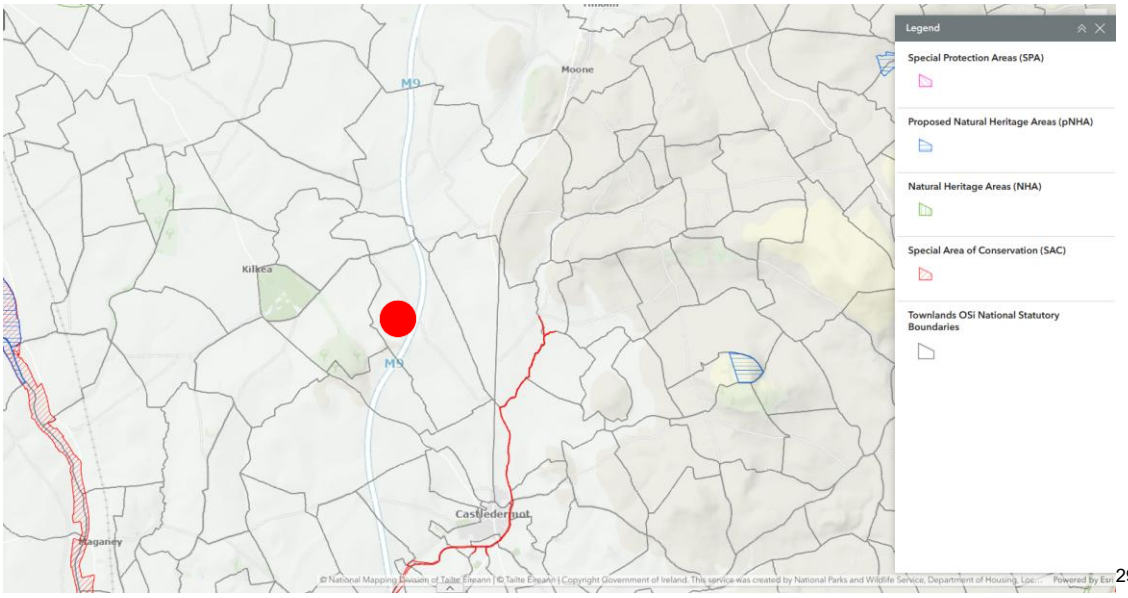
It is likely that the connection of this walking trail would be back by the existing road network for cyclists through the village of Kilkea towards Athy to join the new green way. This connection would be west of the woodland and northwest of the woodland. There is no possibility of this connection occurring adjacent to the proposed site given it position in conjunction with the

[28] https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/find-your-trails

motorway.

11.3.13 Natural Heritage

Natural heritage is examined in this report as it can contribute to landscape value.



[29]

Figure 11.24 NPWS Designated Sites

There are no protected sites within the proposed site or adjacent to the site of the proposed development. There are no (SPA, SAC, NHA or pNHA) within the boundaries or close to the Proposed Development.[30]

None of the listed Natura sites (National Parks and Wildlife Service designations) are within the site of the Proposed Development. All the designated areas are at some distance from the Proposed Development. The Natura sites within Co Kildare do not share intervisibility or landscape with the site of the proposed development.

The hedgerows surrounding the site are protected and additional hedgerows and tree planting bulk out the buffer zones and reinforce the linkages to and between habitats.

[29] Tailte Éireann NPWS Protected Sites
[30] NPWS

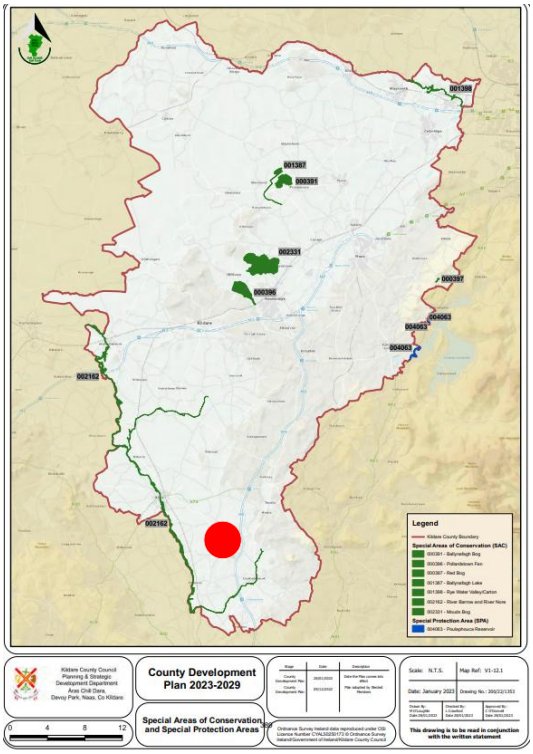


Figure 11.25 Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas as listed KCDP

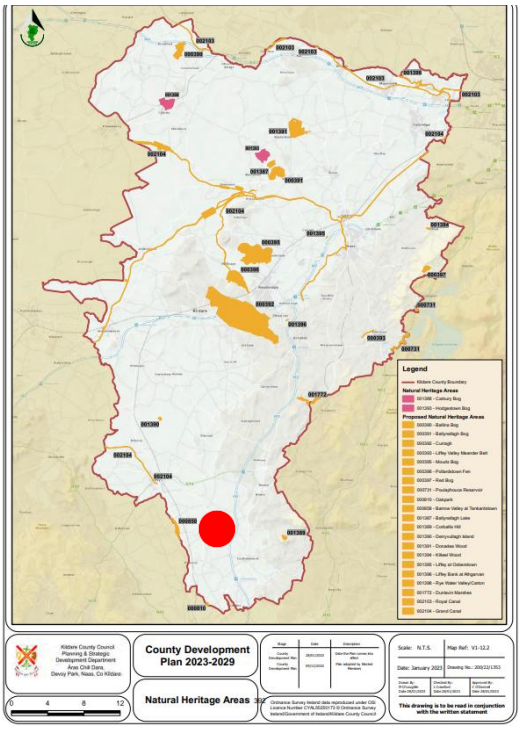


Figure 11.26 Natural Heritage Areas as listed KCDP

11.3.14 Tree Protection Orders, Trees, and Hedgerows

The following objectives of the Kildare County Development are considered as part of the landscape proposals which accompany the proposed application.

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

The landscape masterplan which accompanies this application allows for a generous stand of new trees and the protection of the existing hedgerows at the site of the proposed development.

"BI O26 Prevent, in the first instance, the removal of hedgerows to facilitate development. Where their removal is unavoidable, same must be clearly and satisfactorily demonstrated to the Planning Authority. In any event, removal shall be kept to an absolute minimum and there shall be a requirement for mitigation planting 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 to existing adjacent hedges. Ideally, native plants of a local provenance and origin should be used for any such planting. Removal of hedgerows and trees prior to submitting a planning application will be viewed negatively by the planning authority and may result in an outright refusal."

There is minimal disturbance and removal of hedgerow material. It is also recommended in the mitigation measures that root protection zones are established for all hedgerows during construction as an avoidance measure. It is further recommended that nursery stock and infill hedgerow material is sourced locally and of local provenance.

BI O27 Require the retention and appropriate management of hedgerows and to require infill or suitably sized transplanted planting where possible in order to ensure an uninterrupted green infrastructure network.

This is also recommended in the landscape masterplan.

"BI O28 Promote the integration of boundary hedges within and along development sites into development design so as to avoid "trapped hedges" located to the boundary of houses within the development layout. Encourage the planting of woodlands, trees, and hedgerows as part of new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works ideally using native plants of local provenance and origin."

Native trees and a continuity and increase of the connectedness of the landscape ecology is recommended in the landscape masterplan.

"BI O29 Require the undertaking of a comprehensive tree survey carried out by a suitably qualified arborist where development proposals require felling of mature trees; the tree survey shall assess the condition, ecological and amenity value of the tree stock proposed for removal as well as mitigation planting and a management scheme. It should be noted that rotting and decaying trees are an integral part of a woodland ecosystem and can host a range of fungi and invertebrates, important for biodiversity. While single or avenue trees that are decaying may be removed, others that are part of group or cluster may be subject to retention."

There will be no felling of mature trees required for this development to proceed.

"BI O30 Ensure a Tree Management Plan is provided to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments."

This is not required as there are no trees within the application boundary but a hedgerow protection plan is recommended along with an overall landscape management plan which will ensure the optimum plant care and growing conditions are in place during both the construction and operational phase of the proposed development.

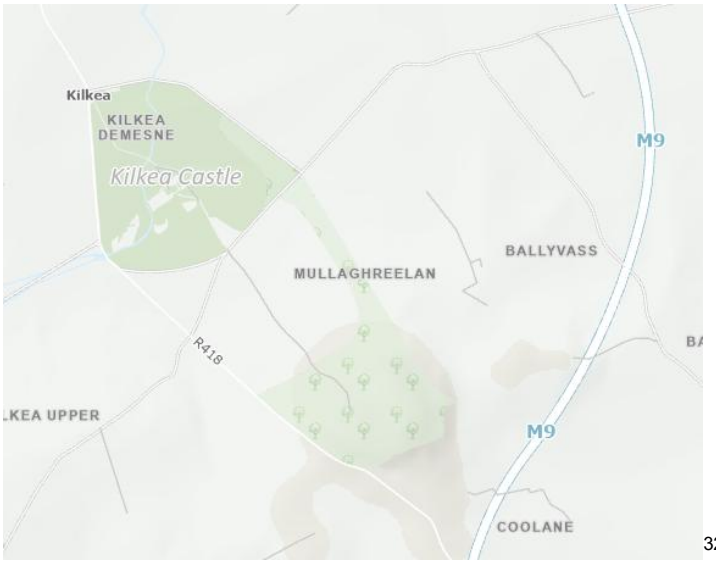
"*BI O31 Restrict the cutting of hedges during the bird-nesting season (1st March until 31st August), except in certain legally defined circumstances, in accordance with the provisions of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. BI O32 Protect trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (see Table 12.3) and the 57 Champion and Heritage Trees in Kildare, which are identified on the Tree Register of Ireland."*

There are no trees in or near the Proposed Development which are subject to tree protection orders or are listed as champion trees. It is also recommended that hedgerow maintenance is to take place outside of the bird nesting season.

[31]

Figure 11.27 Local Tree Protection Orders

[31] https://data.gov.ie/dataset/kildare-tree-preservation-orders-23-29



[32]

Figure 11.28 There are no listed Tree Protection Orders (TPO) in this area.

There are no tree protection orders pertaining to the site of the proposed development. The landscape plans accompanying this application specifies a range of native and naturalised trees and hedgerow materials of differing ages and growth stages which offer immediate habitats and future habitats to a wide range of animals, birds, and insects. There is a small amount of hedgerow taken back to widen the access point, but this is compensated for by the infill and planting measures proposed. The landscape proposals will increase the carbon storage capacity of the proposed site in the short and long term.

11.3.14.1 Woodlands, Trees, and Hedgerows

The landscape masterplan that accompanies this application along with measures ensuring the avoidance of damage to hedgerows address these objectives. The planting mix is native and naturalised for the most part and with native hedgerow material recommended as being sourced locally of local provenance. This is not expected to present any problem to the developers as there is a ready source of plant material of local provenance available from long established tree nurseries and hedge propagation specialists in Counties Kildare and Wicklow.

The increased planting proposed will ensure that there is a greater potential at the site to absorb carbon and maximise the potential as the plant material matures, to increase habitat connectivity and local landscape ecological gain. The proposed increase in the number of hedgerow trees will increase the potential for habitat development and connection within the hedgerow network. The wider landscape ecology is well considered and there will be a gain in connectivity and biodiversity in the overall landscape.

The issue of avoiding invasive species in the landscape is addressed in mitigation as an avoidance measure.

[32] https://data.gov.ie/dataset/kildare-tree-preservation-orders-23-29

11.3.15 Green Infrastructure

BI O70 Ensure that the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Network identified in this County Development Plan and Local Area Plans is used to inform the development management process to ensure that new residential areas, business/ industrial development tourism and other relevant projects contribute towards the conservation and protection of Kildare's habitats and species, and the protection, management and enhancement of the existing Green Infrastructure in terms of design, layout and landscaping.

The Proposed Development includes a landscape masterplan the basis of which is a consideration to conserve the existing elements of the local landscape ecology.

"BI O71 Identify existing Green Infrastructure at the initial stages of the planning process and to use this information to guide the overall design of an appropriate site layout which is reflected in the developments landscaping plan. The landscaping plan submitted with an application should clearly illustrate how existing Green Infrastructure, and opportunities to create more linkages, have informed and been incorporated into the development, layout and, if appropriate, management proposals."

The iterative design process has ensured that a landscape masterplan has been produced which increases the connectivity of the landscape proposals with the surrounding habitats and the protects the existing hedgerows.

BI O72 Ensure that the design of new development does not cause fragmentation of the Green Infrastructure network.

Contrary to causing fragmentation to the local green infrastructure network, the landscape proposals increase the available landscape ecological footprint and reinforces network connectivity.

"BI O73 Encourage the use and incorporation of Biophilic design into all new development schemes, increasing proximity of and/or views to nature, landscape and landscape features, in the interests of public health."

The addition of native tree planting of various ages and stages of development will add a small woodland element to the landscape which as well as screening the Proposed Development will contribute to long term visual amenity especially for viewers travelling on the road infrastructure.

In addition, the landscape proposals address the following KCDP Objectives relating to green infrastructure.

"BI O2 Require, wherever possible, the retention and creation of green corridors within and between built up urban areas and industrial scale developments to protect wildlife habitat value including areas that are not subject to public access."

The landscape proposals include the addition of semi natural grassland areas between the proposed built structure along with specimen tree species as well as surrounding the structures in mixed native tree planting.

"BI O3 Actively support the implementation of national biodiversity initiatives such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2026".

The landscape proposals include the development of semi natural grasslands to be managed for late mowing to facilitate flowering species and ready sources of pollen. The inclusion of flowering trees including species of *Prunus avium*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Salix cinerea* and *Sorbus acuparia* will ensure that there is an increase in pollinating trees available at a local level.

"BI O5 Move towards no net loss of biodiversity through strategies, plan, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue Green infrastructure."

BI O7 Pursue insofar as possible and practical, a policy of biodiversity net gain through strategies, plans, developments, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure.

The landscape proposals that accompany the proposed development contribute towards increasing biodiversity gain in the context of the Proposed Development.

KCDP 2023-2029 includes for an aspiration to connect ecological nodes throughout the County. This is iterated as; "*12.14.7 Nodes/Stepping Stones: All native and mixed woodlands, such as those in State/Coillte ownerships (such as Donadea Wood, Mullaghreelan, Moore Abbey, etc.); • Coillte Forestry Areas (commercial plantations)."*

The stepping stones are described as; "*smaller geographical areas but either critically important because of their environmental quality (i.e., local native woodlands, intact bogs/peatlands, wetlands), local amenity value (i.e., urban parks) or because of their scale as undeveloped areas, such as Coillte forestry plantations."*

Mullaghreelan Woods are the closest listed 'stepping stone' to the site of the proposed development. The increase in planting at the site of the Proposed Development will certainly increase the capacity of the local landscape ecology to boost connectivity within the scope of the project.

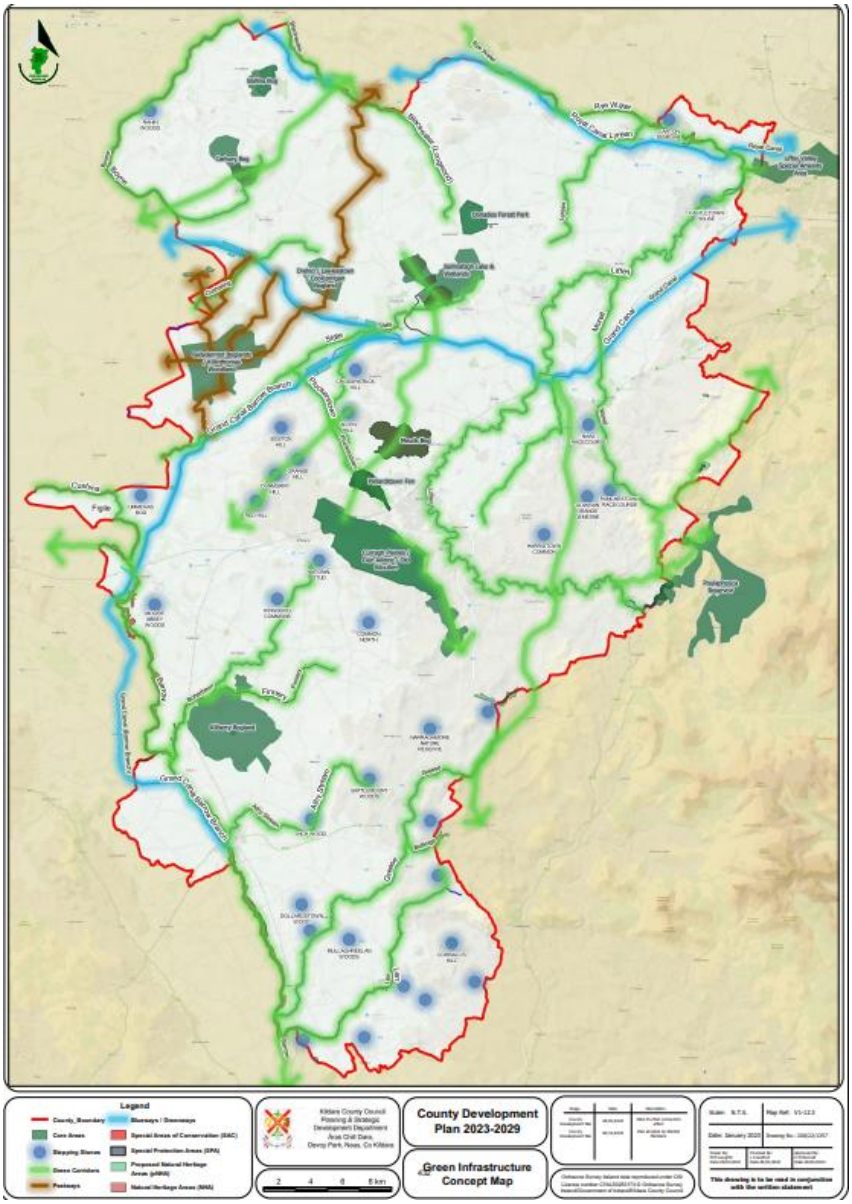


Figure 11.29 KCDP Biodiversity Connection Concept

Figure 11.30 KCDP Biodiversity 'Stepping Stones' Locations

There are generous planting measures accompanying the application for the Proposed Development. The inclusion of oak, holly, whitethorn, blackthorn, rowan, and wild cherry[33] in the planting mix increases the pollinating capacity of the plantings and allows for increased connectivity to other trees and hedgerow habitats locally. It is recommended that the landscape management regime at the operational stage will include hedgerow maintenance and cutting dates that is conscious of the need to allow flowering plants to stay in flower for as long as possible.

The landscape masterplan which accompanies this application includes a substantial number of native trees as well as new hedgerow material native and naturalised, which simultaneously generate new habitat areas and landscape amenity along with the development of semi natural grass spaces.

The substantial increase in the number of trees which will establish at the site of the proposed development will ensure there is good corridor connection to the hedgerow network. This will aid with the conservation and dispersal of species and replace the future loss of ash in the landscape. Biosecurity and invasive species control is recommended as an avoidance measure in the mitigation recommendations. There were no signs of invasive species present during site visits in February and March 2025.

11.3.16 Potential Capacity

Landscape capacity is regarded as the ability of a landscape to visually absorb change and accommodate diverse types of development. KCDP 2023-2029 Chapter 13 has included a list of development categories and their compatibilities to specific landscape character areas. The Eastern Transition LCA, has medium compatibility with industrial projects.

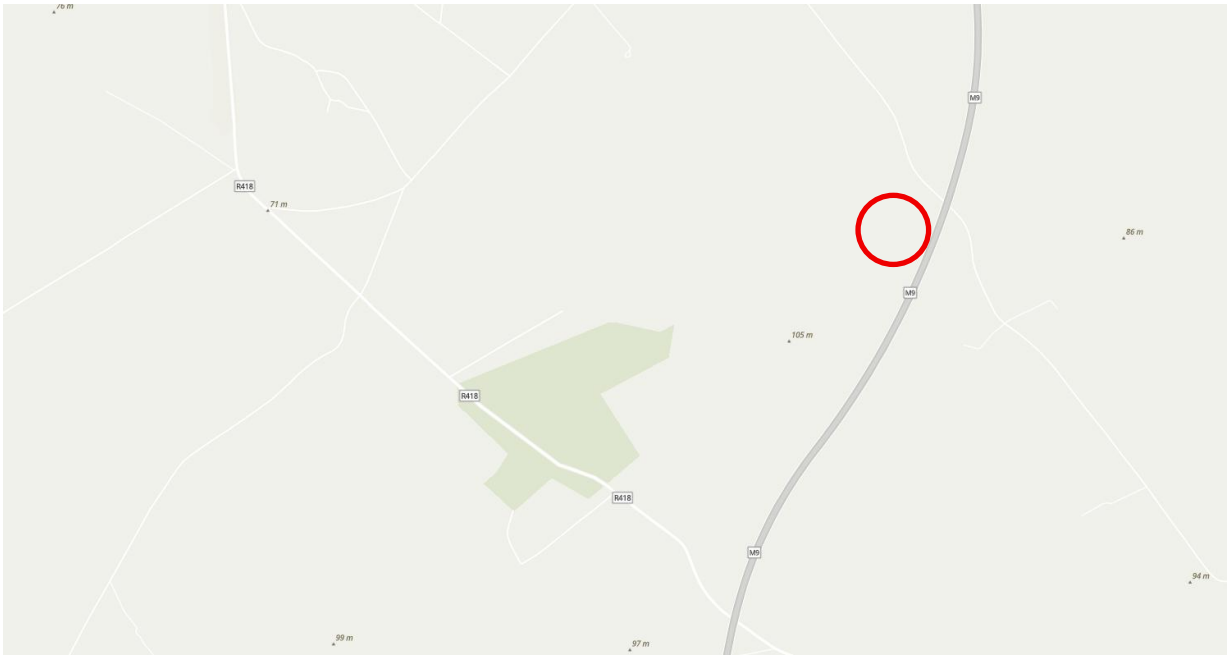
Compatibility Key		Agriculture and Forestry		Housing	Urbanisation			Infrastructure	Extraction		Energy	
Most												
High												
Medium												
Low												
Least												
Principal Landscape Character Areas	Sensitivity Class	Agriculture	Forestry	Rural Housing	Urban Expansion	Industrial Projects	Tourism Projects	Major Powerlines *	Sand & Gravel	Rock	Windfarm	Solar
North Western Lowlands	1											
Northern Lowlands	1											
Southern Lowlands	1											
Central Undulating Lands	1											
Western Boglands	3											
Eastern Transition	2											
Eastern Uplands	3											
South-Eastern Uplands	2											

[34]

Figure 11.31 KCDP Landscape Compatibility Key

[33] https://www.treecouncil.ie/.pdf (Trees for Pollinators)
[34] Chapter 13 KCDP 2023-2029

Topography ensures there is good capacity for the area to enclosure and absorb the potential development. The topography falls from the ridge at Mullaghreelan and starts to rise across the wider landscape towards the east. The proposed site lies below the 100m contour with the ridge at Mullaghreelan at 179m the most prominent local outcrop.



35

Figure 11.32: Landscape Elevations

The mixed woodland and the topography at Mullaghreelan along with the sites low lying location and the relationship of the motorway infrastructure with local topography, the position and location of the motorway bridges all contribute to good capacity to absorb the Proposed Development at the site. The generous stands of hedgerows in the area means there is good capacity to screen development and allow it to be absorbed into the wider landscape.

The soils are rich and capable of supporting good tree growth. The soil association is Elton. Soils are grey, brown podzolic, brown earths with expected medium to high base status. Neighbouring soils are glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits listed as redzina and lithosols. This is expected adjacent to the existing quarry.

The Elton association are fine loamy drifts with limestones. These soils will support excellent tree growth and longevity. This increases an areas capacity to absorb development. The grey, brown podzols and brown earth soils are recommended as a base for tree growth.

[35] https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html

11.4 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The applicants propose to develop an Anaerobic Digestion Facility. The site will be located in the townland of Ballyvass, Co. Kildare.

The development will consist of the following:

- Construction of 2 no. primary digesters (with an overall height of c. 9.1m), a digestate storage tank (with a height of c. 11.3m), a pump house (with a gross floor area (GFA) of c. 362 sq.m), 2 no. post digester tanks (with an overall height of c. 9.1m), and a safety flare (c. 11.3m in height), located in the southeastern section of the site.
- Construction of 2 no. prepits (c. 4.3m in height), a pasteurisation buffer tank (c. 4.3m in height), and a pasteurisation unit (with a maximum height of c. 4.2m), located to the west of the primary digesters, within the southern section of the site.
- Construction of digestate treatment and feedstock reception building and odour abatement system (with a GFA of c. 2,797 sq.m and a height of c. 12.1m and c. 16.2m to top of odour abatement stack) located within the southwestern section of the site.
- Construction of roofed silage clamps (with a GFA of 2,424 sq.m and a height of c. 8.7m) and a fuel storage tank (c. 2m in height), located within the western section of the site.
- Construction of a combined heat and power (CHP) unit (with a GFA of c. 39 sq.m and a height of c. 2.6m and c. 5.6m to top of flue), a biogas boiler (c. 2.6m in height and c. 5.6m in height to top of flue), a backup boiler (c. 2.6m in height), located within the northern section of the site.
- Construction of a gas treatment unit (c. 4.2m in height), a grid injection unit (with a GFA of c. 22 sq.m and a height of c. 2.8m), and a CO_2 liquefactor (with an overall height of c. 10.7m to top of storage vessels) a propane tank compound accommodating 2 no. propane tanks (c. 1.6m in height), and an ESB substation (with a GFA of c. 24 sq.m and a height of c. 3.4m), located within the northern section of the site.
- Construction of a two storey ancillary administration building (with a GFA of c. 327 sq.m and a height of c. 11m) within the northern section of the site, adjacent to the site entrance.
- Alterations to the adjacent local road and site access road, including junction improvement and widening and site entrance and access arrangements.
- Associated and ancillary works including parking (9 no. standard, 2 no. EV and 1 no. accessible parking spaces, and bike storage for 10 no. bikes), site entrance and gate, a weighbridge, solar PV arrays at roof level, wastewater treatment equipment, bunding and surface treatments, boundary treatments, lighting, services, lightning protection masts, drainage, landscaping and tree planting, and all associated and ancillary works.

11.4.1 Site Location

[36]

Figure 11.33: Site Location

[36] ORS Site Plan

The site is located wholly within the townland of Ballyvass, Co. Kildare. The site of the Proposed Development is currently in agricultural use surrounded by good hedgerows. There is a segment of young hedgerow running parallel to the motorway. A long lane leads to the site of the Proposed Development. The entrance to the site from the lane will require some widening. There will be cutting back and removal of a short segment of the hedgerows to provide access from the lane to the entrance of the site of the Proposed Development.

11.4.2 Landscape Character and Sensitivity

Landscape character as discussed above is a significant aspect of the landscape receptors susceptibility to change. The effect on landscape character and its ability to accommodate the proposed development, maintain the baseline and achieve landscape planning policies is considered. The elements which contribute to positive landscape character at or near the site of the proposed development is the topographical differentiation and contrast, the woodland outcrop, and the field pattern. The hedgerows are a valuable landscape element contributing to spatial integrity and landscape quality at the site of the proposed development.

The findings of the field study (Appendix 11.2) concur with the description. The '**medium'** sensitivity as ascribed in the landscape character assessment and the findings which considers the proximity of the motorway and other large units in the landscape character area is an appropriate rating.

Therefore, considering the nature of the proposed development, the intrinsic and inherent values attributed to the landscape character area and assessing the landscape at and near the site of the proposed development the rating '**medium'** is appropriate for landscape sensitivity.

11.5 Predicted Impacts

11.5.1 Landscape Construction Phase

The changes to the landscape will occur during the construction stage. The proposals will require access which will widen the entrance.

Apart from this there will be no loss of landscape elements that would alter the landscape character at a local level.

However, there will be a new scale introduced into the landscape. The landscape exhibits a reasonable capacity for change when accompanied with tree planting. Woodland and trees are an addition to the existing landscape which add to the overall landscape pattern and will effectively blend with the eastern woodland and field mosaic of the area.

The soils will contribute to excellent tree growth. The proposed topographical adjustment will work with the existing topography in the area. Any soil disturbance or overload is to be utilised onsite as far as practicable. The proposals are accompanied by a landscape masterplan indicating how the development is to be integrated into the surrounding landscape. This will achieve in protecting the existing landscape character and reinforce it somewhat. The soils will support the tall vegetation once contoured and selected carefully. The trees specified in the landscape masterplan which will screen the development in time.

11.5.1.1 Magnitude of Change

During the construction phase there will be activity at the site of the Proposed Development. Machinery travelling to and from the site, site compounds and storage facilities as well as lighting and other construction aids will have an impact on the landscape in the short term.

During the construction process hedgerows will need to be cut back and there will be some removal of hedgerow at the site entrance.

The outer field pattern will remain intact.

The proposed planting of new hedgerows, trees and screening will add new elements to the landscape pattern which will benefit it positively over time.

This development will be in place for more than 15 years which constitutes a long-term change (15 and 60 years as per the EPA guidelines).

Landscape character will be affected by the change in land use resulting from construction on the site of the Proposed Development. The change experienced to the landscape will be due to the introduction and scale of the components of the proposed facility. The geographical extent will be confined between Mullaghreelan Wood and the M9 motorway.

The scale of change will be due to the digestors and their contrast in form to other agricultural buildings and its difference from the agricultural character of surrounding fields. Incongruity will result directly following construction.

The Eastern Transition Landscape Character Area is linear in nature and the greater landscape character area will not be affected in its geographical extent.

The overall quality of the existing woodland trees and hedgerows will blend the proposals into the landscape. At the construction phase the landscape benefits of tree and hedgerow planting using native and naturalised trees and hedgerow materials is not considered. The reversibility of the development is not considered for the construction phase.

The overall magnitude of change will be **'medium.'** This is in line with the description of medium landscape change which is moderate in extent with the introduction of elements that may be prominent but "not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic in the context. Such development results in change to the character of the landscape but not necessarily reduction in landscape quality and perceived value."

11.5.1.2 Significance of Effects

Setting a **medium** magnitude of change against **medium** landscape sensitivity gives a significance of effects that is categorised as **'Moderate'** as indicated in the matrix in Table 11.1, above.

As per EPA guidelines moderate effects are defined as.

Moderate: An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.

The likely **moderate** effect will be adverse and medium term until the development is absorbed by maturing trees.

11.5.2 Landscape Operational Phase

There will be no change to the landscape form or structures placed therein from the construction phase as the facility becomes operational. As part of the landscape proposals, it is recommended that there will be a significant mixed screen planting wrapped around the proposed facility. This will largely include native and naturalised trees and plant material.

This will effectively envelope the proposed development in the landscape.

It will also screen the scale and form of the structures and add additional deciduous trees and Scots Pine to the overall landscape which blends with the landscape character area. Trees will add another favourable element to the landscape in the long term.

During the operational phase of the development, maturing trees present an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the overall landscape. The landscape sensitivity is not likely to change from the construction phase, but the magnitude of change will be lower as the landscape proposals start to establish and grow. In the medium term, the positive landscape impact of the trees and understory development will reduce the magnitude of change experienced at landscape level from medium to low.

Landscape Sensitivity: **Medium**

Magnitude of Change: **Low**

Setting a **medium** landscape sensitivity against a **low** magnitude of change gives a significance of effects rating as **'slight'** as indicated in Table 11.1 above**.** Given the scale of the development and using professional judgement, a rating of **'moderate to slight'** is more likely

to be appropriate for the significance of effects in the medium term. This will decrease in adversity with the passage of time as the trees develop into a woodland copse and the landscape significance of effects reduces to slight.

Significance of effects: **Moderate to Slight**

So whilst the likely effect will be adverse and long term, the tree planting and general landscape proposals will be positive and the benefits to the landscape will be permanent with many of the species listed in the planting schedule capable of living for more than one hundred years.

11.5.3 Visual Assessment

In conducting the visual assessment for the Proposed Development, issues relating to views and viewpoints were considered including the amount of time over which a view would be experienced, the angle of the view and whether views would be full, partial, or glimpsed. The distance from the Proposed Development was considered and the extent of the area over which the proposed works would be visible. Initially a zone of theoretical visibility (Appendix 11.1) or viewshed influenced the areas being considered for intervisibility. A ZTV is computer generated and presents the worst-case scenario and examines intervisibility without the effect of natural land cover, forests, woodlands, trees, buildings, and vegetation. The area was visited and the most likely visual receptors affected identified. Again, as for the landscape effect, the duration of the visual impact was considered. The duration of the visual effects is considered as appropriate. As per EPA guidelines, duration of effects is categorised as follows.

Short-term Effects: Effects lasting one to seven years.

Medium-term Effects: Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.

Long-term Effects: Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.

Permanent Effects: Effects lasting over sixty years.

As described in Table 11.1 above, the magnitude of change is judged according to a set of criteria with results ranging from very high to negligible. Judgements are made based on the size of the proposed works and the geographical extent of the viewpoints. Consideration is also given to duration of effects as outlined above. In choosing the viewpoints to be assessed the scale at which the Proposed Development will have influence was considered and this is considered within the magnitude of change as assessed. The sensitivity of each view is adjudged taking into consideration other factors apart from value and recognised designations. These include the susceptibility of the viewers, panoramas, frequency of visits, features and rarity of the view and the intact nature of the landscape being viewed. Sensory experiences of place, tranquillity, history, nature, and awe also factor into viewpoint sensitivity. A comprehensive assessment was made of potential viewpoints. These were then distilled down to a set of viewpoints which are the subject of the verified photomontage study. The accompanying, verified view photomontage booklet is to be read in conjunction with this report. In making these assessments, topography, site location, hedgerows systems, woodlands, and residences were considered as well as designated sensitivities and landscape as a resource for visual amenity, recreation, culture, and tourism.

11.5.4 Visual Impact – Construction Phase

The selected viewpoints were assessed, and this is summarised as outlined in Table 11.2 below. The sensitivity at each viewpoint is set against the magnitude of change to arrive at a significance of effects as outlined in Table 11.1 above. Again, the sensitivity of each viewpoint is set against the magnitude of change to that view to arrive at a significance of effects at each viewpoint. The matrix is not over relied on and where appropriate, professional judgement and experience is exercised.

11.5.4.1 Initial Field Study

The area around Ballyvass was visited on 4th, 10th and 24th February 2025 and on the 5th March 2025.The viewpoints selected were also photographed on March 7th and 10th, 2025, for verified photomontage production. The visual impact assessment is to be read with the 3Dimensional, verified photomontage booklet which accompanies this report. The site location and its hinterland were examined referencing the viewshed analysis. Taking topography and vegetative cover into consideration, an inventory of viewpoints was selected. Upon establishing the location of likely viewpoint receptors each was visited and an assessment with respect to viewpoint sensitivity and the likely magnitude of change to this view due to the Proposed Development was made. The verified photomontages of these views examine the extent of any visual impact or loss of visual amenity at these viewpoints.

On the occasion of these initial field studies, conditions were good for the time of year. The hedgerows and trees were in a winter presentation, devoid of deciduous leaf cover.

These views, VP 1-6, are assessed in detail at the construction stage and at the operational phase. The accompanying verified photomontage booklet prepared by 3Dimensional, gives a clear indication of the magnitude of change at each of these viewpoints. All viewpoints were taken from publicly accessible areas. Many have been accorded '**high**' receptor sensitivity which as iterated in the methodology above; is defined for viewpoints "that are recognised in policy or otherwise designated as being of value, or viewpoints that are highly valued by people that experience them regularly (such as views from houses or tourist-based views focused on the landscape). The composition, character and quality of the view may be such that its capacity for accommodating change may or may not be low. The principal management objective for the view is its protection from change that reduces visual amenity."

At the construction phase, the placing of the structures into the topography helps partially absorb them into the landscape. The objectives of the landscape plan to protect the landscape and views from change that reduces visual amenity cannot be realised fully at the construction phase. The full effect of the tree planting will be more apparent during the operational phase when the plant material starts to establish and mature.

11.5.4.2 Visual Impact - Construction Phase

Table 11.2: Predicted Visual Impacts on Selected Viewpoints Assessed – Construction Phase

Viewpoint No.	**Location**	**Sensitivity**	**Magnitude of Change**	**Significance of Effects**	**Nature of effects**
VP1	Mullaghreelan	High	Negligible	Slight to Not Significant	Adverse

VP2	Ballyvass	High	Medium	Significant	Adverse
VP3	Ballyvass M9 Bridge	Low	High	Moderate to Slight	Adverse
VP4	Coolane	High	Negligible	Slight to Not Significant	Adverse
VP5	Mullaghreelan	High	Medium	Significant	Adverse
VP6	Coolane M9 Bridge	Low	Negligible	Imperceptible	Neutral

Viewpoint 1

This viewpoint represents local residents and the tourism, recreational, archaeological and historic resource at Kilkea Castle. The golf club at Kilkea represents an activity that is dependent on outdoor views in the landscape for visual amenity. For this reason, this viewpoint is accorded a high viewer sensitivity. The topography shields the view from exposure to the Proposed Development. There will be negligible change to this view during construction. Setting a **negligible** magnitude of change against a **high** viewpoint sensitivity result in a significance of effects that is rated **'slight to not significant'** and adverse as set out in Table 11.1 above.

Viewpoint 2

This viewpoint represents road users and local residences. Residential viewers are accorded a **high** receptor sensitivity. Road users who experience the view in a fleeting way are a low sensitivity receptor group. The magnitude of change at this viewpoint is rated as **medium** during construction. There will be activity, plant, machinery, and construction equipment visible during the construction process. The beneficial screening for the landscape proposals is not considered during the construction phase. The effect of planting is considered during the operational phase.

There will be no loss of elements in this view.

Setting a **'medium'** magnitude of change against **'high'** viewpoint sensitivity as set out in Table 11.1 above, gives a significance of effects that is rated as '**Significant.'** The effect will be **short to medium term.**

Viewpoint 3

This viewpoint represents road users. The view is taken from the bridge over the M9 motorway. Although this view also represents motorway motorists, it must be understood that travelling on the M9 will be at a lower level. Motorists there will not experience this view to the same degree as those on the local road.

The Proposed Development will be visible during the construction stage at this viewpoint. Construction materials, large plant and machinery will be visible during construction.

The proposed digesters and buildings do not break the skyline. This viewpoint represents local road users and those travelling on the motorway. The motorway is at a lower level than the viewpoint and will not be experienced to the extent represented in the verified photomontages. Road users in particular motorists on the motorway experience views in a fleeting and glimpsed manner and are accorded a **low** viewer sensitivity.

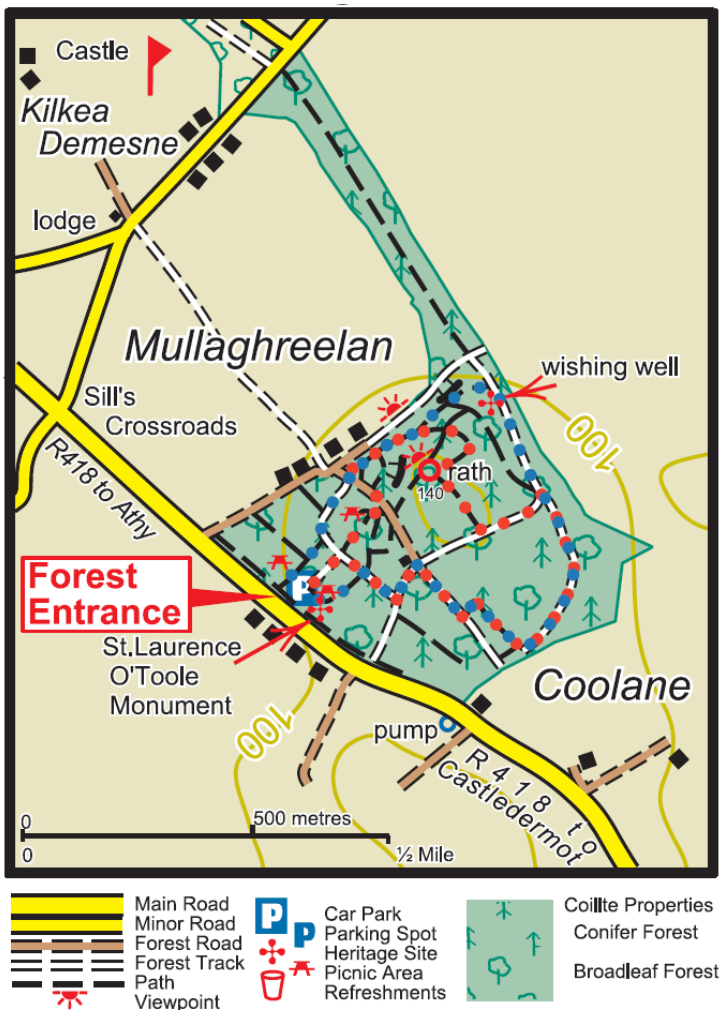
The expected magnitude of change at this viewpoint is **'high'** during construction as there will be a lot of visible activity, construction plant, machinery, and materials visible. Setting a **'high'** magnitude of change against **'low'** viewpoint sensitivity as set out in Table 11.1 above, gives a significance of effects that is rated as '**Moderate to Slight.'** The impact of the landscape proposals is not considered for the construction stage as growth will not be effective until the Proposed Development is at the operational phase. This effect will be **short to medium term** and will reduce year on year as trees fill out and eventually screen the Proposed Development.

Viewpoint 4

This viewpoint represents residential receptors and local road users. The presence of local residential receptors means this view has been accorded a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity. Road users, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists have a low viewer sensitivity as this view will only be experienced in a fleeting manner. The magnitude of change to this view will be '**negligible'** at the construction stage. Setting a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**negligible'** magnitude of change to the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as **'slight to not significant'** as outlined in Table 11.1 above.

Viewpoint 5

In selecting this viewpoint, the recreational and amenity use of Mullaghreelan was carefully considered. This viewpoint was selected following an examination of the trails within Mulaghreelan Wood. The O'Tuathaill and the Rath Trails are the main trails, and these will not be affected due to intervisibility.



[37]

Figure 11.33: Mullaghreelan Wood Trails- Coillte

[38]

Figure 11.34: Mullaghreelan Wood Trails- Sports Ireland

[37] Coillte Mullaghreelan Trails
[38] https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/find-your-trails

Figure 11.35: Mullaghreelan Wood Trails- All Trails

The ridge generates a good height over an otherwise flat landscape with limited views afforded from the summit where Mullaghreelan Rath is located.

Fig. 11.36 (left) and Fig. 11.37 (below) Woodland to the edge of Mullaghreelan Rath

The views from the rath and summit of the ridge at Mullaghreelan have become enclosed with the growth of adjacent trees. The view back to the castle is mostly obscured. There are views through the trees to the Laois hills to the west but the views towards the Proposed site are obscured by tree growth.

[39] https://www.alltrails.com/explore/trail/ireland/county-kildare/mullaghreelan-wood-o-tuathaill-walk

Fig. 11.38 Car Parking and Picnic Area Unaffected

Within the woodland itself all the recommended hiking trails largely focus on the internal woodland for visual amenity and none of these trails will be affected. The entrance car park and picnic areas will not be affected in any way by the proposed development.

There is one viewing point marked as a heritage point in the woods with a view east - southeast. The view is not focussed on the Proposed Development and the perimeter of the woodland protects this view from any sight of the Proposed Development.

Fig. 11.39: Heritage Point View Unaffected

Fig. 11.40: Exit from Kilkea Estate

A trail from Kilkea Castle connects with a trail within the woodland along a slender segment of mixed woodland with trees of good age and substantial height. A small stream is crossed to access the trail. This trail will not be affected by the Proposed Development due to the enclosure afforded by the mature woodland and the topography east of the woods.

Fig. 11.41 & 11.42 Nearby segments of trail which were examined are also well enclosed within the trees. A small stream (above left) is crossed at the start of the trail.

Fig. 11.43, Fig. 11.44: Segments of trail which were examined are also well enclosed within the trees.

Closer to the site of the proposed development and along the eastern side of the woodland, tracks are similarly well enclosed with one opening on a forest road, visible on the trail. Visual amenity at this part of the trail will not be affected by the proposed development.

Fig. 11.45: Perimeter Opening on forest road

Fig. 11.46: Storm damaged perimeter opening

However, there is one opening which was examined following Storm Eowyn (Fig 44). A track, listed by Alltrails as 'perimeter' (see above) which runs off the listed trails runs along the eastern woodland perimeter lower down and away from the main trails. On my visit this track was not fully passable due to storm felled trees and damage. Much of the perimeter track is enclosed and the views on the southern and southeastern segment are protected by topography and the overburden at the quarry site. Storm damage opened up a view on this track towards the site of the Proposed Development. This view was carefully assessed and selected as Viewpoint 5. It must be noted that this view represents the worst affected point in the woodland. The other woodland trails are not expected to be impacted at all. It also considers local archaeological elements.

This viewpoint has been accorded a '**high'** viewer sensitivity because of the presence of recreational receptors who depend on views for visual amenity. There is enough distance between the proposed development and the viewpoint to reduce much of the visual impact at the construction stage. There will be plant, material and construction traffic moving about the site of the proposed development. This viewpoint was assessed without any deciduous foliage on the trees or hedgerows. There are two hedgerows with hedgerow trees between the viewpoint and the proposed development. This viewpoint will appear a good deal more screened in late spring, summer, and early autumn.

The magnitude of change to this view will be '**medium'** during construction. Setting a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**medium'** magnitude of change to the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as '**significant'** as outlined in Table 11.1 above. The impact will diminish somewhat during the operational phase once proposed planting softens the development in the view.

Viewpoint 6

This viewpoint represents pedestrians and road users in particular motorists at this point on the motorway infrastructure. Pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists have a **low** viewer sensitivity here as their experience is brief and glimpsed.

The Proposed Development will be screened by the topography, trees, and the hedgerow system during construction. There will be no intervisibility between this viewpoint and the proposed development. Therefore, the magnitude of change attributed to this view is '**negligible**.' Setting a '**low**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**negligible'** magnitude of change to

the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as '**imperceptible** as outlined in Table 11.1 above. The effect is neutral.

11.5.5 Visual Impact – Operational Phase

The operational phase of the project will not have any additional large impacts on visual receptors. There will be no change to structures in the views from the construction phase. There will be more vehicular movement into and out of the facility than is currently the case but likely less than at the construction phase. There are specific considerations at each viewpoint which are addressed here below.

As part of the landscape and mitigation measures long term changes to the landscape are taken into consideration over the life of the project. The ability of the landscape proposals to not only mitigate but improve the quality of the views in line with landscape character over time is factored in at the operational stage of the Proposed Development. The landscape measures are important during the operational phase of the project when tree growth will start to contribute to protecting visual amenity. The species, plant specifications optimum growth rates and establishment time is considered. The development and growth of plant material in the short to medium term is considered for the screening effect of tree and hedgerow growth.

The selected viewpoints were assessed as for the construction phase above, and this is summarised as outlined in Table 11.3 below. The sensitivity at each viewpoint is set against the magnitude of change to arrive at a significance of effects as outlined in Table 11.1 above. The matrix is not over relied on, and professional judgement and experience is employed to rate the viewpoints.

The operational phase of the project gives an opportunity to the developer to future proof the visual amenity afforded by trees and hedgerows.

The operational period will coincide with the establishment of the screen trees which will buffer the key areas around the structures. It is estimated that there will be effective screening established in the medium term with the ameliorating effect of the landscape proposals increasing each year. Many of the selected species will live for more than 100 years having a permanent positive impact on the views. This will compensate for the loss of ash trees in the landscape and views into the future.

The assessment at the operational phase considers the likely hood of optimal tree growth and hedgerow protection given the design specification to source and maintain healthy plants until establishment.

Table 11.3: Predicted Visual Impacts on Selected Viewpoints Assessed – Operational Phase

Viewpoint No.	**Location**	**Sensitivity**	**Magnitude of Change**	**Significance of Effects**	**Nature of effects**
VP1	Mullaghreelan	High	Negligible	Slight to Not Significant	Neutral
VP2	Ballyvass	High	Low	Moderate to Slight	Adverse
VP3	Ballyvass M9 Bridge	Low	Medium	Slight	Adverse

VP4	Coolane	High	Negligible	Slight to Not Significant	Neutral
VP5	Mullaghreelan	High	Medium to low	Moderate	Adverse
VP6	Coolane M9 Bridge	Low	Negligible	Imperceptible	Neutral

For the purpose of this assessment the beneficial effect of tree screening as specified in the landscape plans is considered in the short to medium term. Likely growth and screening to year ten post construction forms the basis of the assessment during the operational phase. The ability of tree screening and tree development to continue to provide visual amenity in the medium to long term is noted for all the viewpoints.

Viewpoint 1

As discussed above for the construction phase, this viewpoint represents local residents and the tourism, recreational, archaeological and historic resource at Kilkea Castle. The golf club at Kilkea represents an activity that is dependent on outdoor views in the landscape for visual amenity. For this reason, this viewpoint is accorded a **high** viewer sensitivity. The topography shields the view from exposure to the Proposed Development. There will be **negligible** change to this view during the operational phase. Setting a negligible magnitude of change against a high viewpoint sensitivity result in a significance of effects that is rated **'slight to not significant'** as set out in Table 11.1 above. The effect will be neutral given new tree growth will start to appear over the brow of the hill as it establishes over the period of the operations.

Viewpoint 2

This viewpoint represents road users and local residences. Residential viewers are accorded a '**high'** receptor sensitivity. Road users who experience the view in a fleeting way are a low sensitivity receptor group. The magnitude of change at this viewpoint will reduce to '**low'** over the operational period as plant material becomes established and the screening proposals start to become effective. There will be no loss of elements in this view.

Setting a **'low'** magnitude of change against **'high'** viewpoint sensitivity as set out in Table 11.1 above, gives a significance of effects that is rated as '**moderate to slight.'** The effect will be **short to medium term.** Year on year thereafter tree growth and hedgerow management will continue to increase the level of visual amenity at this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 3

This viewpoint represents road users. The view is taken from the bridge over the M9 motorway.

The visibility of the Proposed Development will be greatly reduced from the construction stage at this viewpoint. There will be a great benefit in the view from the establishment of the trees and screening proposals.

The proposed digesters and buildings do not break the skyline. This viewpoint represents local road users and those travelling on the motorway. The motorway is at a lower level than the

viewpoint and road users will experience a fleeting view of a young woodland copse. Road users generally experience views in a fleeting and glimpsed manner and are accorded a '**low'** viewer sensitivity.

The expected magnitude of change at this viewpoint during the operational phase is reduced to **'medium.'** Setting a **'medium'** magnitude of change against **'low'** viewpoint sensitivity as set out in Table 11.1 above, gives a significance of effects that is rated as '**Slight'** and adverse. This effect will be **short to medium term** and will reduce year on year as trees fill out and eventually screen the Proposed Development.

Viewpoint 4

This viewpoint represents residential receptors and local road users. The presence of local residential receptors means this view has been accorded a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity. Road users, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists have a low viewer sensitivity as this view will only be experienced in a fleeting manner. The magnitude of change to this view will be '**negligible'** at the construction stage. Setting a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**negligible'** magnitude of change to the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as **'slight to not significant'** as outlined in Table 11.1 above.

Viewpoint 5

As discussed above for the construction phase, in selecting this viewpoint the recreational and amenity use of Mullaghreelan was carefully considered. This viewpoint was selected following an examination of the trails within Mulaghreelan Wood. The O'Tuathaill and the Rath Trails are the main trails, and these will not be affected due to intervisibility with the Proposed Development. As discussed above, the various tracks within the woodland will not be affected and this viewpoint focusses on the point selected on the eastern perimeter track away from the main trails. This viewpoint has opened up following storm damage along a track.

This viewpoint has been accorded a '**high'** viewer sensitivity because of the presence of recreational receptors who depend on landscape experience for amenity. Archaeological elements are also considered. There is enough distance between the proposed development and the viewpoint to reduce much of the visual impact at the operational stage. The feedstock reception building and the treatment building as a unit will be visible but, screening trees will start to develop and establish themselves at this stage. The trees will not block the view of the building as seen in the verified photomontage in the short to medium term, but they will soften and screen it. This viewpoint was assessed without any deciduous foliage on the existing trees or hedgerows. This viewpoint will appear a good deal more integrated in late spring, summer, and early autumn such as a large agricultural building in the landscape. The digesters are not in view at this viewpoint.

The magnitude of change to this view will reduce from **medium** to **'medium to low'** during the operational phase. Using professional judgement and setting a '**high**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**medium to low'** magnitude of change to the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as '**moderate'** as outlined in Table 11.1 above. The impact will diminish further with time as trees gain height and continue to absorb this building into the landscape.

Viewpoint 6

This viewpoint represents pedestrians and road users in particular motorists at this point on the motorway infrastructure. Pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists have a **low** viewer sensitivity at

this viewpoint as their experience is brief and glimpsed.

The Proposed Development will be screened by the topography, trees, and the hedgerow system during operations. There will be no intervisibility at this viewpoint. Therefore, the magnitude of change attributed to this view is '**negligible**.' Setting a '**low**' viewpoint sensitivity against a '**negligible'** magnitude of change to the viewpoint, results in a significance of effects that is rated as '**imperceptible** as outlined in Table 11.1 above. The effect is neutral.

11.5.6 'Do Nothing' Scenario

There will be no difference to the views or the landscape for a 'Do Nothing' scenario. It is likely the site will remain as agricultural land.

11.5.7 Cumulative Impact

There are no other known biogas proposals within the landscape character area. Other biogas facilities in the county at Lackaghmore, Monasterevin, Gorteen Nurney, and Littleconnell and Great Connell Newbridge will not have a cumulative effect with this proposal given the distance between the developments. There will be no instance of intervisibility between these facilities and the Proposed Development.

11.6 Mitigation Measures

The following landscape protection and landscape impact mitigation measures should be put in place to avoid, eliminate, or minimise any potential landscape and visual impact associated with the construction of the Proposed Development.

- Any area of site subject to soil disturbance is to be repaired, the soil reworked into the site, recontoured and modelled. Matching sod/seed sown to blend the topography back into the rural landscape.
- All construction materials, fill, gravel, etc to be removed from the site and surrounding fields once the works are complete.
- Earthworks and hedgerow banks to facilitate appropriate drainage for the soil type and this to be detailed at the design detail stage.
- An irrigation plan to be put in place to allow for establishment of plantings with the irrigation water source to be identified prior to the spring of the first year of planting. A plan to irrigate in hot weather and as required to be put in place especially for the first two years after planting. Recovered process water which has been cooled may be used.
- Hedgerows are to be maintained as thick tall hedgerows with an A shaped profile and laid as required in the traditional manner. Hedgerow trees are to be maintained as such.

11.6.1 Avoidance Prevention Reduction and Offsetting

Mitigation is discussed below as a measure of avoidance, prevention, reduction and offsetting of impacts and effects. The positioning of the digestion tanks into the topography along with specified screen planting avoids the proposed structures breaking the skyline. Other measures include;

11.6.1.1 Disease

- The avoidance of any further *Fraxinus excelsior*, ash, in any planting will not only protect

existing landscape trees from the biologically infectious chalara disease, but it will also protect the local habitats that ash supports for as long as possible, by avoiding this biosecurity risk.

- Any plant materials brought on site to be disease free of local provenance, to at a minimum hold all relevant plant passports and preferably be sourced field grown and inspected at source prior to planting. This is to avoid spreading potential infections to local populations. All trees and shrubs will conform to the specification for nursery stock as set out in British Standard 3936 Parts 1 (1992) and 4 (1984). Advanced Nursery stock trees where used in tree planting shall conform to BS 5236.Standards for plant establishment to conform to at a minimum BS 8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape and BS3998.

11.6.1.2 Topsoil

- Avoid bringing topsoil on site. Use local soil to make localised repairs. Where additional topsoil is required use from a matching source as local as possible to the Proposed Development. Do not mix topsoil and sub soil during construction. Identify storage area where soils are to be stored separately until they are reworked into the new landscape contours. Do not mix gravelly soils with richer brown earths and podzolic soils, using the latter topsoil in earth works and contouring for tree growth. Optimal growth is expected for most of the species selected on brown earth soils and all bunds are to utilise this material for topsoil. Localised patches of thinner redzina soils are to be checked for at excavation and bund formation. Soils are to be tested prior to earthworks. Amelioration to be informed by soil tests. Topsoil is not to be removed from the site.

11.6.1.3 Invasive Species and Biohazards

- Avoid spreading or bringing invasive plant species onsite in soil or plant materials. Soil and plant material hygiene to be observed and plant, boots, tools, and equipment to be clean before being brought on site. All involved at the construction stage to be made aware of this prior to coming on site.

  Invasive Alien Plant Species include;
  - Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*
  - Giant knotweed *Fallopia sachalinensis*
  - Bohemian knotweed *Fallopia x bohemica*
  - Himalayan knotweed *Persicaria wallichii*
  - Old man's beard *Clematis vitalba*
  - Winter heliotrope *Petasites fragrans*
  - Garden Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon ssp argentatum.*

  Of these, knotweed is most likely to be problematic if introduced on site.

- *Thaumetopoea processionea*, commonly known as the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) is not to be brought onsite and reported immediately to the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM), if identified on or near to the site.
- *Xylella fastidiosa* also presents a threat to new and existing planting and is to be avoided and reported to DAFM if detected on or near the site.
- All hedgerows and hedgerow trees which are being retained are to be protected during the

construction process with a root protection zone established, prior to the commencement of construction.

- No root systems to be trenched severed or cut and there is to be no piling of building materials, soil, plant, containers, or any loading material on the protected root zone during construction. All parties involved in the construction process to be made aware of this avoidance measure. No unnecessary damage is to occur to the existing tree and hedgerow complex during construction or afterwards during operations.
- At the detailed design stage tunnelling is to be preferred over trenching where pipework interacts with existing hedgerow systems in selected areas. This to minimise the impact of pipe works on adjacent hedgerow structures.
- The root protection zone is to at a minimum be positioned outside the drip line of the hedgerow system.
- Palisade fencing is to be screened with hedging and trees.
- Planting specifications to be overseen by a qualified landscape architect during the construction and operational period as required.

11.6.2 Reinforcing Landscape

Any damage to field boundaries received during construction to be repaired in the traditional manner. Low banks for planting trees and hedgerows are to be reinforced where possible. The screening planting and new tree planting will reinforce much of the landscape pattern. Following correct landscape construction and planting, all plant material is to be properly and satisfactorily, irrigated, pruned and given correct amounts of appropriate fertiliser to ensure plant health and vigour.

11.6.2.1 Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan

- A landscape management plan is to be produced and ready post construction so that all new and existing planting, hedgerows, and trees will be immediately cared for and promptly maintained. This plan along with any necessary method statements to be produced during the operational phase of the planting by a qualified landscape architect.
- Landscape maintenance and management plans ought to remain in place until all plantings are fully established and during the life of the Anaerobic Digestion Facility. The aim of the plan is to continue to ensure landscape character is maintained as well as biodiversity and habitat protection.
- A landscape maintenance and management plan will include a small woodland/hedgerow management plan and will address appropriate hedgerow cutting, timing of operations, protection of hedgerow habitats, address irrigation of newly planted trees or infill plants, accessing water, pruning, weeding, fertilising, trimming, management of dead and diseased wood, and general maintenance. Plant establishment to be provided for appropriately. All amelioration as required for good plant establishment to be tailored to the plants, trees, and hedgerows to satisfy their continued growing needs.
- Cutting and timing of operations in the landscape management plans to facilitate for full benefit of pollinators
- Hedera colchica as identified in the flora survey not to be allowed to establish itself in the hedgerows.

- The mitigation measures as outlined are conducted throughout the life of the operation.
- Periodically the landscape maintenance and management plans to be reviewed to ensure growth, screen establishment and general appearance of the site is fulfilling its original intent. Stake belts are to be loosened as required and stakes cut down and or removed as appropriate.
- Hedgerow maintenance and laying are to occur outside of the nesting season and where hedgerows are weak and require significant work to rejuvenate the hedgerows, this to be completed on each side, on alternate years.
- Appropriate native infill materials to be used in the rejuvenation of the hedgerows e.g. Crataegus monogyna, Ilex aquifolium etc,
- Flowering hedgerow plants and other pollinators are to be factored into the hedgerow cutting regime with respect to timing of operations and infill planting opportunities.

11.6.3 Buildings and Structures

- The colour of the buildings as selected will blend into the landscape similarly to agricultural buildings. A suitable dark green specification is to be applied on all metal cladding. The least reflective colours to be chosen to avoid light reflection and to reduce the apparent size of the buildings in the landscape. Standards as expected for large agricultural buildings to be applied to prevent incongruent colour choices on the buildings and structures.

11.6.4 Failure of mitigation measures

- The landscape proposals can be regarded as mitigation measures in this context. A good diversity and mix of species sizes and varieties along with the landscape management proposals as outlined above will ensure there is little chance of complete failure of the planting. In the unlikely event that this is the case, the screening potential of trees will be lost and the ability of the landscape to absorb the development will be diminished. The potential visual amenity that maturing trees lend to a landscape will also be lost. The long term and permanent benefit of trees will also be lost if there is a failure of planting as a mitigation measure.
- Should failure occur, the entire planting proposals will have to be reinstated upon detailed examination as to why they were not successful in the first instance.
- Competent and qualified horticulturist to be employed to plant, establish and manage the landscape and trees once they are growing effectively.

11.7 Interactions and Cumulative Impact

Other environmental impacts which will interact with landscape and visual impacts in the case of this Proposed Development are biodiversity related and are generally positive and beneficial. Mitigation measures which avoid damage to the landscape and views will also help mitigate biodiversity loss. The archaeology and cultural heritage can interact with landscape and visual impact in certain areas.

11.7.1 Biodiversity and Carbon Absorption

Biodiversity, floral, faunal, and microbial will benefit from tree planting and tree maintenance and the use of native and naturalised species as prescribed in the planting mix. There will also be a pollinator benefit from the tree and hedgerow specifications, increasing the habitats for bees and other pollinating insects. Adding native and naturalised trees to the landscape has a generalised effect of increasing habitat size and habitat connectivity in the area. It adds to the corridors which connect hedgerows, woodlands, and habitats to each other.

The avoidance of *Fraxinus excelsior*, in the planting plan species mix will not only protect existing landscape trees from the biologically infectious chalara disease, but it will also protect the local habitats that ash supports for as long as possible, by avoiding this biosecurity risk. Avoiding infectious plant diseases in plant selection will also prevent spreading disease to local tree stands.

The emphasis is to be on plant selection of disease resistant, resilient, locally produced and propagated, screening trees of native and naturalised provenance. This will incorporate alternative climax species to ash and will ensure a good addition to the local biodiversity. The requirement to use locally sourced, produced and propagated, native and naturalised plant material will decrease the chances of introducing disease to the system. Climax trees like oak in the planting specification ensures the schedule of planting is maximising its capacity as a carbon absorptive sink. This service will continue permanently i.e. for a period of greater than 60 years. The plantation of native and naturalised trees around the proposed facility will also ensure that as trees age and decline in the landscape and commercial forestry is harvested, in this area, there will be a woodland replacement in place. Maturing oak, Scots Pine, beech, and other climax trees will ensure there are species present to replace ash in the ecosystem. These species can absorb carbon in increasing quantities each year until maturity. Maturity is expected to continue for greater than 100 years.

11.7.2 Residual Impacts

Once all mitigation measures have been implemented and there is ongoing care provided to the landscape tree planting and hedgerows over the life of the project, the Proposed Development will be effectively screened, and a plantation of trees will be an addition to the landscape. Year on year the development of taller trees will continue to absorb the Proposed Development. Apart from the impacts as outlined in the assessment above no further residual impacts are expected.

References

Environmental Protection Agency, 2022. Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports

Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA)

Kildare Council County Development Plan 2023-2029

Teagasc and Cranfield University ISIS – Irish Soil Information System
Geological Survey Ireland

https://www.townlands.ie

https://www.logainm.ie

https://www.alltrails.com/ireland

https://www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/find-your-trails

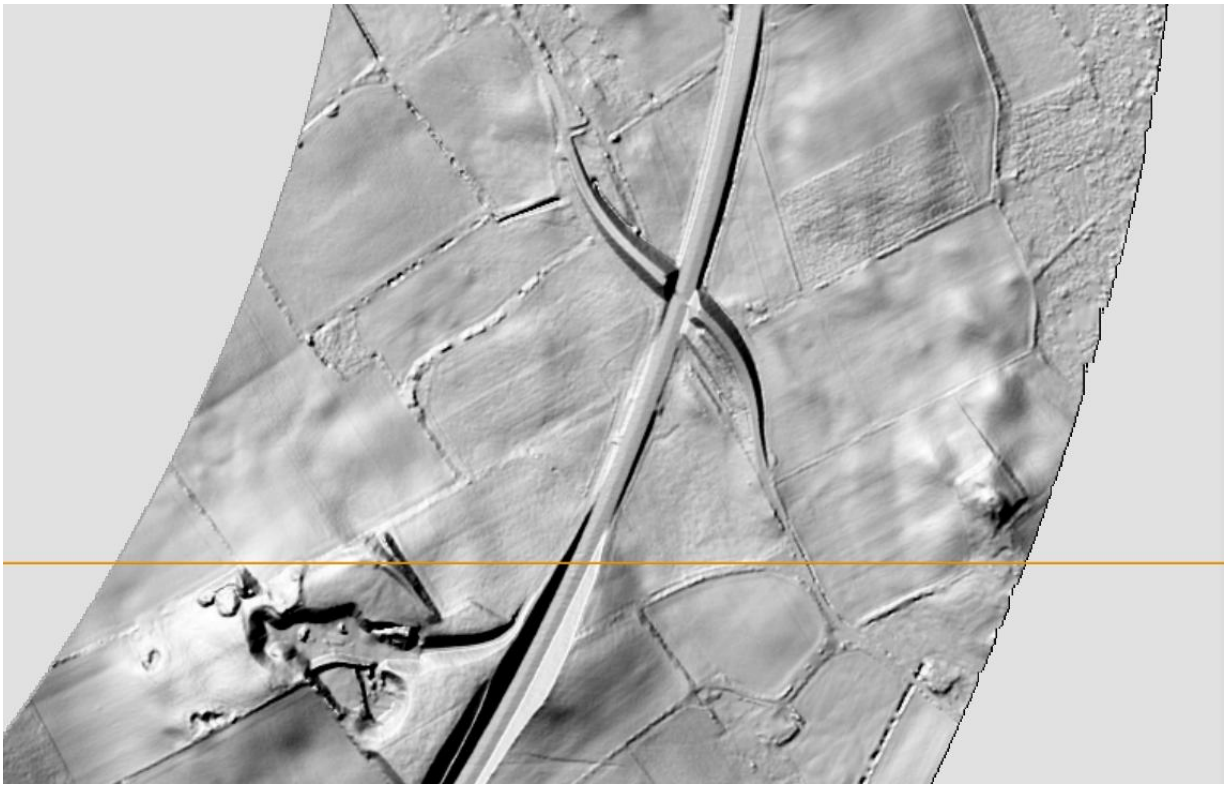
Tailte Éireann OSI 2013, Historical Maps

County Kildare Landscape Character Assessment for KCDP 2023-2029

https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

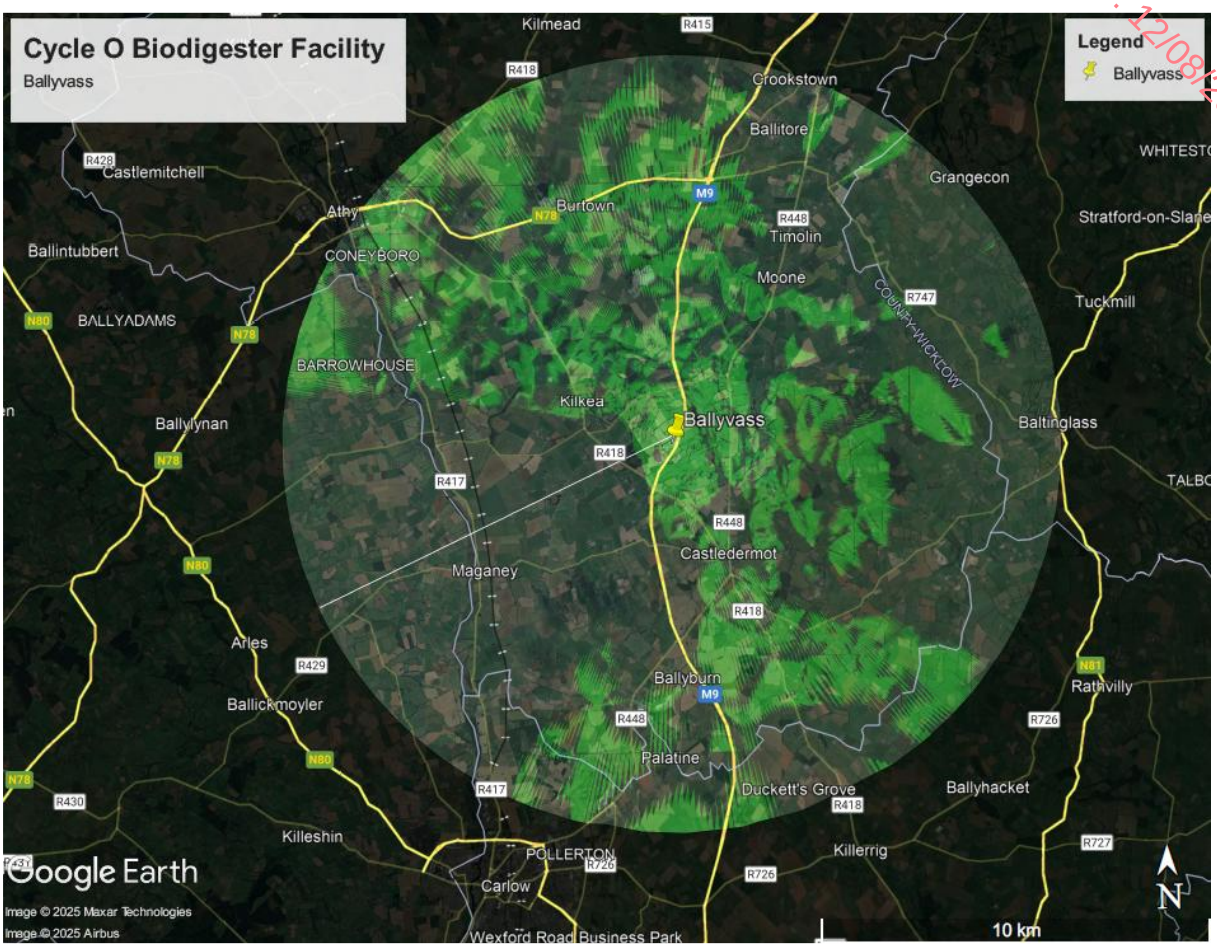
Appendix 11.1: Zone of Theoretical Visibility ZTV, Viewpoint Locations, Soil Type Map

[40] Figure 11.45: LiDAR TII

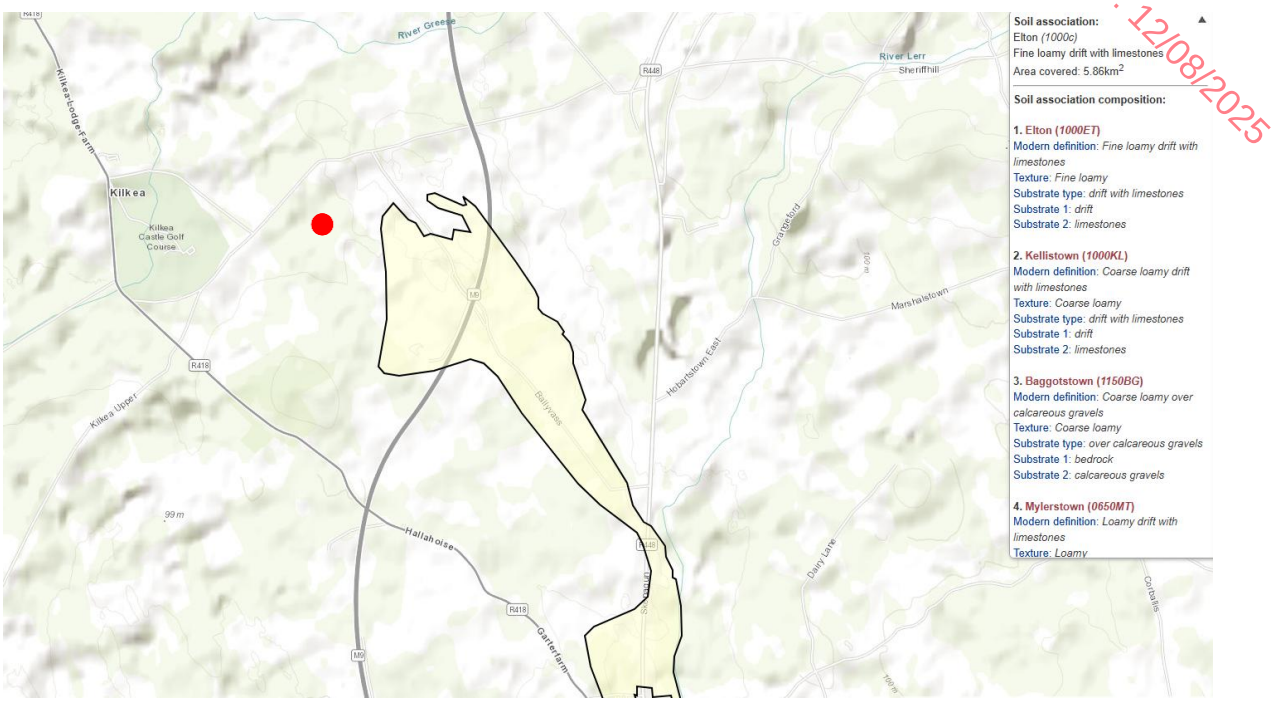


[40] GSI LiDAR Transport Infrastructure Ireland
https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html

Figure 11.46: Zone of Theoretical Visibility.



[41]Figure 11.47: Soil Association, Elton Association



[41] Tailte Éireann Geological Survey Ireland Teagasc Soils

Figure 11.48: Soils are grey, brown podzolics, brown earths with expected medium to high base status. Neighbouring soil listed as redzina and lithosols.

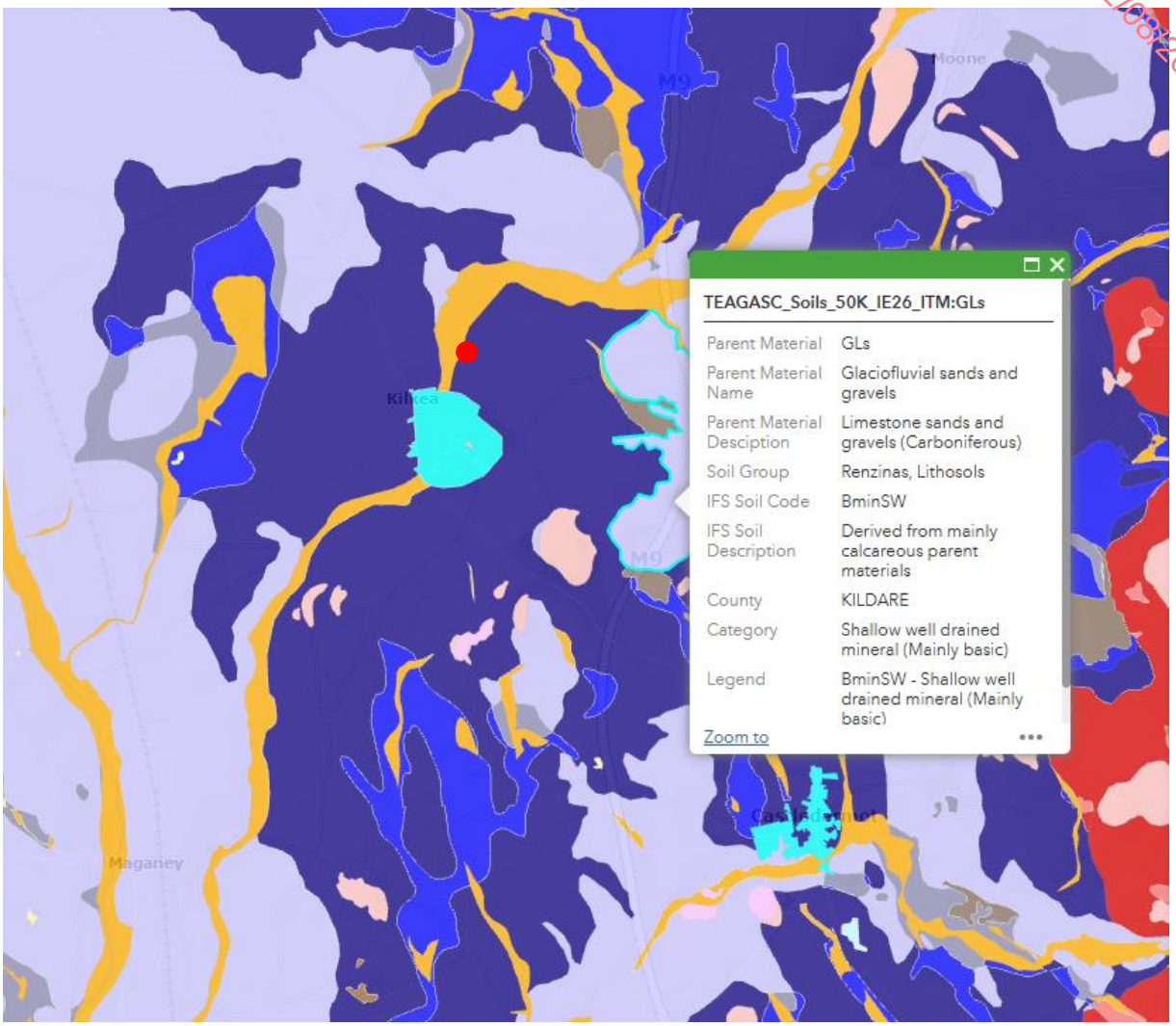
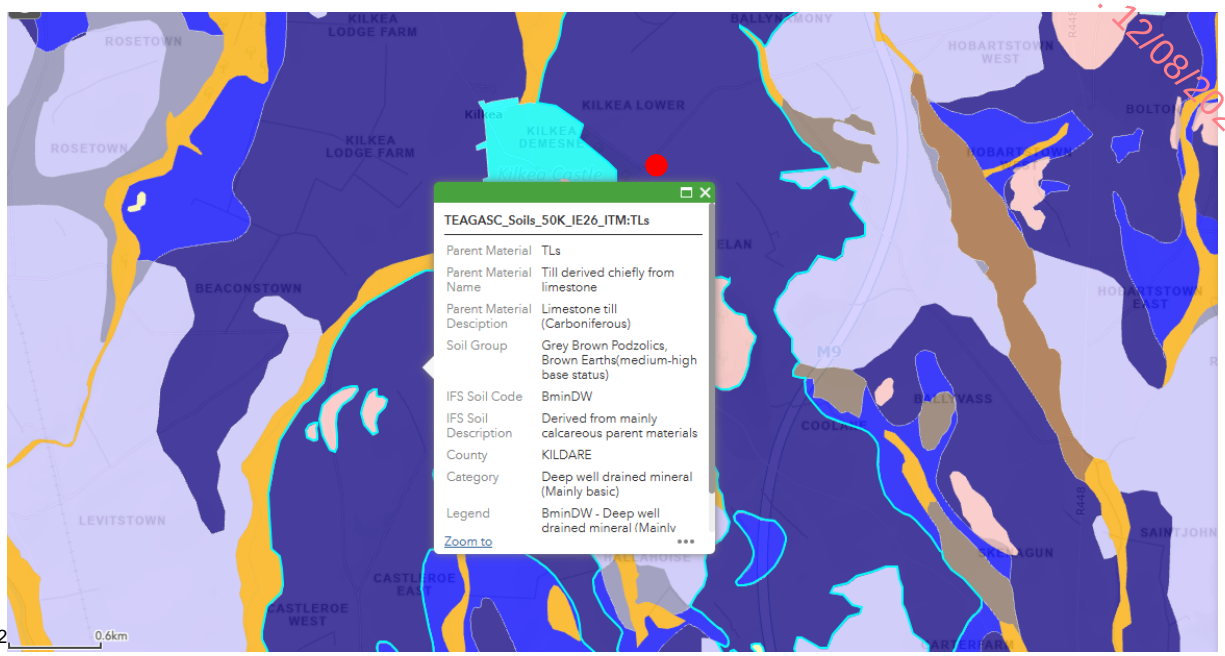


Figure 11.49: Neighbouring rendzina soils also have a high base status.



[42] http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php Esri, Environmental Protection Agency & Teagasc SIS National Soils Map Ireland

[43]

Figure 11.50: Verified photomontage viewpoint locations.

[43] Image ;3 Dimensionnel

Appendix 11.2: Field Survey Photoset

Landscape Character

Fig. 11.51: The landscape character is influenced at a local level by Kilkea Castle Demesne as seen here from Sill's Cross. This local landscape character will not alter due to the Proposed Development.

Fig. 11.52: Details relating to the demesne landscape of Kilkea Castle influence the landscape character at a local level. The example above relates to the southern entrance to the castle and golf club.

Fig.11.53: The topography and the ridge at Mullaghreelan, protects the landscape north and west of the woodland from the influence of the motorway infrastructure. It also protects a slender connection between the castle and the woodland at Mullaghreelan.

Fig.11.54: Arable production in rich agricultural land, demesne trees and the castle itself influence the character of the landscape in the local hinterland. This aspect of landscape character will not be altered or influenced by the proposed development.

Fig.11.55: Tall deciduous mature trees lining the road influence the landscape character at the edge of the castle demesne.

Fig.11.56: Gently rolling topography and the ridge at Mullaghreelan protects the landscape character from the influence of the motorway infrastructure at a local level. This will also ensure landscape integrity relating to the Proposed Development.

Fig.11.57: The landscape surrounding the site of the proposed development lies lower than the rolling topography.

Fig.11.58: The greatest influence on landscape character at the site of the proposed development is the existing motorway infrastructure. The site of the proposed development lies between the motorway and the higher elevation of the ridge line at Mullaghreelan Woods. Mature hedgerows surround the proposed site to the north, west and south.

Fig.11.59: The influence of the M9 on landscape character.

Fig.11.60: The proposed site is well defined as a field unit by the hedgerow system.

Fig.11.61: The topography on either side of the motorway encloses the landscape and the lower lying proposed site. This ensures the geographical extent of the motorway, or the Proposed Development is limited. The landscape character area described as ‘Eastern Transition’ is linear and influenced by the topography rising to the east and falling away to the low-lying agricultural landscapes to the west.

The landscape demonstrates good capacity for absorption and the motorway facilitates compartmentalisation of space quite well over relatively short distances.

Fig. 11.62: M9 influence on local landscape character.

At and near the site of the Proposed Development the landscape displays characteristics typical of the Eastern Transition Area as set out in the Kildare County Development Plan landscape character assessment. However, landscape experience is confined within a boundary of natural topography and road infrastructure.

Fig.11.63: Access to the proposed site and the existing quarry is shielded in the greater landscape partially due to the presence of the motorway bridge and the earthworks to the edge of the bridge approach. Neat young hedgerows run parallel to this access road.

Fig.11.64: Approach to the motorway bridge.

Fig.11.65: Neat young hedgerows run parallel to the quarry access road and the motorway.

Fig.11.66 The lane leading to the proposed site has a locally different landscape character enclosed by native hedgerow and hedgerow trees.

Fig.11.67 Local landscape character is also influenced by plant establishment in the last 15- 20 years. This contrasts with the roadside tree establishment from the nineteenth century which generates a different landscape character due to age.

Fig.11.68: Slightly damper ground northeast of the site adjacent to the approach lane has a contrasting landscape character generating landscape variety over a short distance.

Fig.11.69: Approach lane

Fig.11.70: Local landscape character is influenced within Mullaghreelan Woods by the mix of coniferous and deciduous trees. The trails and tracks within the woodland are based on an experience of woodland landscape. The landscape character experienced within the woodland differs from that experienced in the landscape surrounding the woodland.

Fig.11.71: Tall deciduous trees within the woodland

Fig.11.72: Trees of various ages and heights within the woodlands

Fig.11.73: The woodland landscape experienced locally as marked trails with some informal tracks.

Fig.11.74: Tracks along the eastern perimeter of the woodland with tall deciduous trees generate a contrast to the coniferous planting. This generates a more ancient woodland character.

Fig.11.75: The contrasting tree girths and heights reveals varying tree ages and generates a landscape character that contrasts within the woodland.

Fig.11.76-79: Views from the rath at Mullaghreelan have become enclosed. The landscape character at the rath is influenced by the archaeological monument and the surrounding woodland. Coniferous trees blend with deciduous trees and woodland scrub.

Fig.11.80 The best vantage point towards the Laois hills is from this westerly track at Mullaghreelan Woods where the extent of the plain can be appreciated with a landscape character based on a mosaic of large fields both arable and pastoral. The spatial division of the landscape is generated by the hedgerows into the well-articulated mosaic of a large field system.

Fig.11.81: In the wider landscape character area, the mixed woodland on the Mullaghreelan ridge influences landscape.

Fig.11.82: Similar landscape character further north at Belan, in the Eastern Transition landscape character area, displays good capacity to absorb development as in the example at the motorway bridge (KE M0901300) where maturing trees will continue to help absorb this more dominant development. Closer to the structure, its size is not as apparent because of its relationship to nearby trees. The proposed development is expected to be less dominant in the landscape character area.