

13.4

Landscape Baseline

The Landscape Baseline reports relevant policy pertinent to the LVIA, as well a description of the receiving landscape of the Site and its wider setting. This section is divided into:

- **Landscape Designations and Policy Context** - Policy setting pertaining to the location and nature of the Site from a landscape perspective based on:
 - Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028
 - County Limerick development Plan 2022-28
 - County Kerry Development Plan 2022-28
- **Landscape Character of the Site** – A description of the physical landscape and characteristics of the Site and its immediate setting, this includes the following considerations:
 - Landscape characteristics based upon findings from site visits conducted in 2023 and 2024.
- **Landscape Character of the Wider Landscape Setting** – A description of the wider landscape setting, including the identification of designated Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) located within 15 km of the existing turbines and a preliminary analysis using ZTV.

13.4.1

Landscape Designations and Policy Context

This section reviews the policies and objectives of various planning policy documents relating to landscape, planning, and the locational siting of wind farms, as they relate to the Site.

The existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located in County Cork, therefore, the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 (hereafter referred to as the CCDP) was consulted to identify landscape designations existent in the LVIA Study Area. Additionally, general landscape policy and landscape policy pertaining to wind energy development are also included in this section of the LVIA.

13.4.1.1

County Cork

Section 14.7 and 14.8 of the CCDP outline policies related to landscape and visual amenity within County Cork. The general objectives in relation to landscape from the CCDP 2022-28 are listed below.

“County Development Plan Objective GI 14-9: Landscape

- *Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork’s built and natural environment.*
- *Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.*
- *Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.*
- *Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.*
- *Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.”*

In relation to Objective 14-9, this LVIA will address the impact of the Proposed Lifetime Extension on visual and scenic amenities of County Cork, including the nature of views and visual effects from designated scenic routes, which are addressed in Section 13.4.1.1.3 and Section 13.7.3.2. The siting and design of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is discussed in the context of ridgelines in Section 13.4.3. As the Taurbeg Wind Farm is already existing, there will be no construction phase, resulting in the removal of extensive trees, hedgerows, historic walls, or other distinctive boundary treatments.

“County Development Plan Objective GI 14-10:

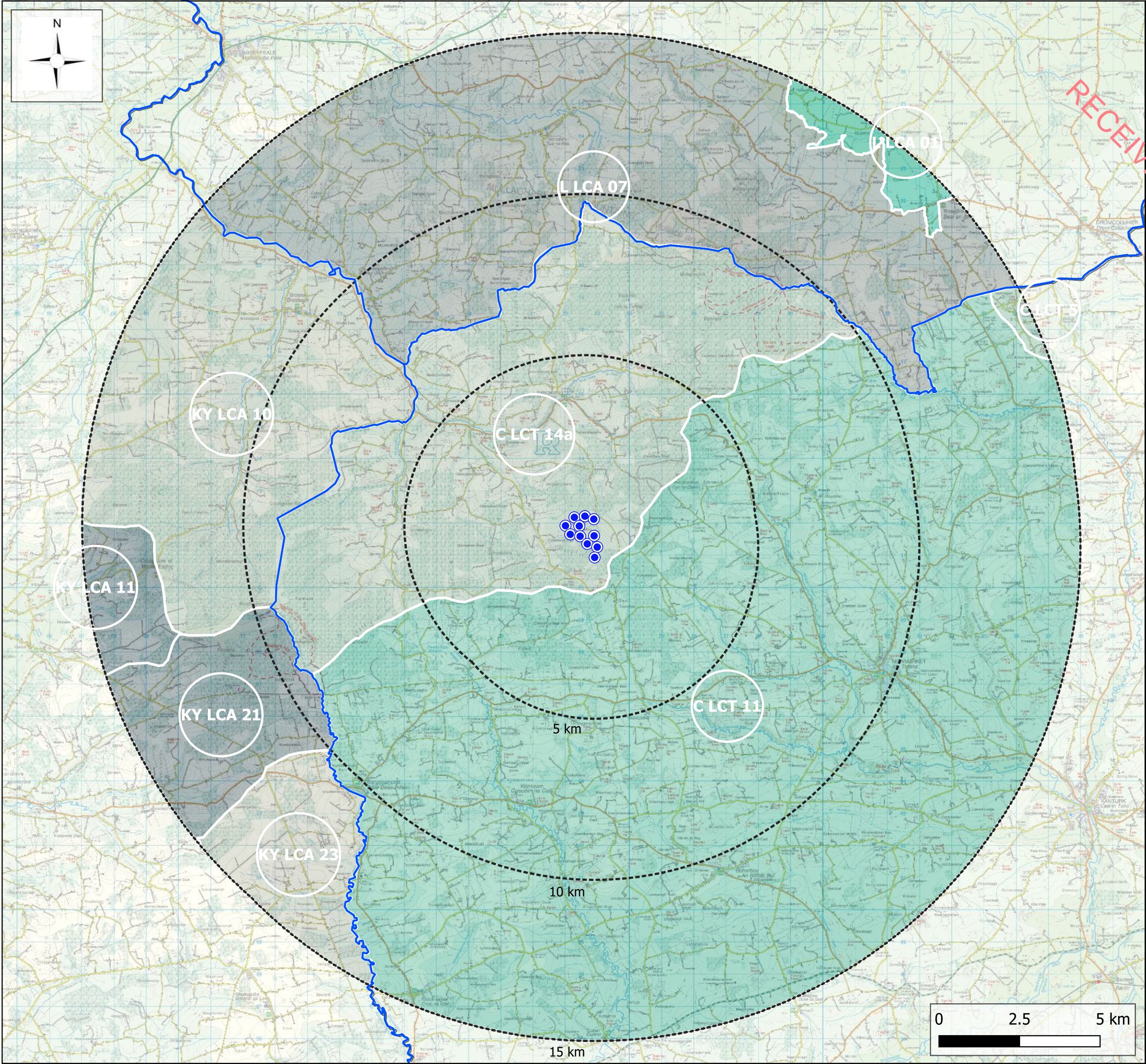
Ensure that the management of development throughout the County will have regard for the value of the landscape, its character, distinctiveness and sensitivity as recognised in the Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy and its recommendations, in order to minimize the visual and environmental impact of development, particularly in areas designated as High Value Landscapes where higher development standards (layout, design, landscaping, materials used) will be required.”

Regarding Objective GI 14-10, Section 13.4.1.1.1 shows that the Landscape Character Type – LCT - 14a – Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland is designated as Medium sensitivity and value in the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007 and discusses the recommendations for LCT 14a. LCT 14a is not designated as a County Cork ‘High Value Landscape’.

“County Development Plan Objective GI 14-11:

Have regard to the Draft Cork County Landscape Strategy (2007) in the preparation of plans and other policy guidance being prepared during the lifetime of the Plan. Review and update the Draft Cork County Landscape Strategy as soon as is practicable following the publication of a National Landscape Character Assessment as well as taking into account any associated guidelines. Whilst advocating the protection of such scenic resources the Plan also recognises the fact that all landscapes are living and changing, and therefore in principle it is not proposed that this should give rise to the prohibition of development along these routes, but development, where permitted, should not hinder or obstruct these views and prospects and should be designed and located to minimise their impact. This principle will encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes.”

In relation to Objective 14-11, this LVIA addresses effects of the Proposed Lifetime Extension on designated scenic routes. Viewpoints 1, 2 and 5 show that the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is visible from designated scenic route 15 and 17 but does not obstruct any scenic views and are visible in the background. The views and visual effects from designated scenic routes are discussed further in Section 13.4.1.1.3 and Section 13.5.1.2.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area - 15km for assessment on of effects on designated LCAs
- County Borders
- Existing Taurbeg Turbines

Co. Cork. Designated LCAs

- C-LCT-11 Broad Marginal Middleground Valleys
- C-LCT-5 Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge
- C-LCT-14a Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland

LCA Kerry 15km

- KY-LCA-10 Mount Eagle and Upper Clydagh River Valley
- KY-LCA-23 River Blackwater and Rathmore
- KY-LCA-21 The Brown Flesk River Valley
- KY-LCA-11 Tralee and Castleisland Valley

LCA Limerick 15km

- L-LCA-07 Agricultural Lowlands
- L-LCA-01 Southern Uplands

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Figure 13-5

Drawing Title

LCA Map

Project Title

Taurbeg Wind Farm Extension of Operational Life

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1:115,000	231030	25.06.2025	KC	JW

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13.4.1.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment

Cork County Council prepared a Draft Landscape Strategy in 2007. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of County Cork established a set of 76 LCAs reflecting the complexity and diversity of the entire county. Considering the expanse and variety of County Cork's landscape, the character areas have been amalgamated into a set of 16 Landscape Character Types (LCTs) based on similarities evident within the various areas. These LCTs provide a more general categorisation of the county's landscape. The Landscape Character Assessment is contained in Volume 1, Appendix F of the CCDP and identifies designated LCTs as well as landscape sensitivity. As shown in Figure 13-5, the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located within LCT 14a - *Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland*. The policy and objectives in relation to LCT 14a is discussed below.

This LCT is designated as:

- > **Landscape Value:** Medium
- > **Landscape Sensitivity:** Medium
- > **Landscape Importance:** Local

The Draft Landscape Strategy 2007 describes this LCT as a landscape with “*relatively steep but rolling mountainous upland, which is fissured, in places quite deeply, by narrow serpentine rivers but also which includes some broad flat ground*”. The key landscape characteristics are listed below as stated in the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007.

Landscape Key Characteristics - Land use, field, boundaries, trees, and wildlife

- > “Includes the Mullaghareirk Mountains.
- > Topography of this landscape is one of relatively steep and rolling mountainous upland, fissured by narrow river valleys and which slopes towards broad flat ground.
- > Fields comprise grassland, much of which is of marginal agricultural quality, while there are also some areas of broadleaf woodland.
- > Soils on these slopes and valley bottoms tend to be of poor quality and include blanket peat on upper slopes, which have resulted in intensive coniferous plantations.”

The existing Taurbeg turbines are located within a central part of the Mullaghareirk Mountains range where the landscape is relatively steep and rolling mountainous upland, fissured by narrow river valleys, as stated in the characteristics above.

Pressure for Change

- > “**Windfarms** - Existing windfarm development has made a strong imprint in this landscape type. **This has been recognised as a strategic area for windfarms** and while further windfarm developments in this area will have a lasting influence on the landscape, their cumulative visual impacts should be thoroughly assessed. The spread of windfarms may also have impacts on traditional practices, for example the harvesting of turf on peat lands.

As stated below in Section 13.4.1.1.4, the existing Taurbeg turbines are located within an area designated ‘Normally Discouraged’. However, in the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007, the LCT was considered to be an area recognised as a ‘*strategic area for windfarms*.’ Taurbeg Wind Farm was constructed before LCT 14a was designated as ‘Normally Discouraged’. This has resulted in several wind farms being built in the uplands of the Mullaghareirk Mountain range. This included wind farms on upland areas such Knockacummer and Foilard. As determined in this LVIA, it is evident that the upland landscape characteristics of the Mullaghareirk Mountain range (LCT 14a) and wider landscape setting appropriately absorbs the existing wind farms.

The Draft Landscape Strategy 2007 sets out recommendations for each LCT within County Cork. The recommendations for LCT 14a - *Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland*, which are relevant to the Proposed Lifetime Extension are listed below:

Recommendations.

- *Maintain the visual integrity of this LCT, which has retained a dominantly undisturbed landscape.*
- *Recognise the value of the upland areas (Mullaghareirk Mountains) in this LCT particularly as a tourism resource for hill walking etc.*
- *Plantations and re-plantations should be planned and managed in a way that enhances the landscape and should be set back from peaks and ridges.*
- *Have regard to the impact of windfarms on the landscape. Such developments will need to be located and laid out in a sensitive manner.*

Since the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007, the visual integrity of the LCT has been altered by the addition of existing turbines to the landscape. The Proposed Lifetime Extension will not be a new addition to the landscape, that would alter visual integrity of this LCT, considering the Taurbeg turbines already exist within the landscape. The value of the upland areas is discussed in Section 13.4.1.1.1 and Section 13.7.2.1.2, which is designated as medium value and sensitivity in the CCDP 2022-28.

13.4.1.1.2 **Landscape Sensitivity Rating**

Section 14.8.4 of the CCDP states that a “The Sensitivity of each character type is defined as the ability to accommodate change or intervention without suffering unacceptable effects to its character and values.” The Landscape Character Assessment contained in Appendix F of the CCDP defines and classifies the LCAs according to the following classifications:

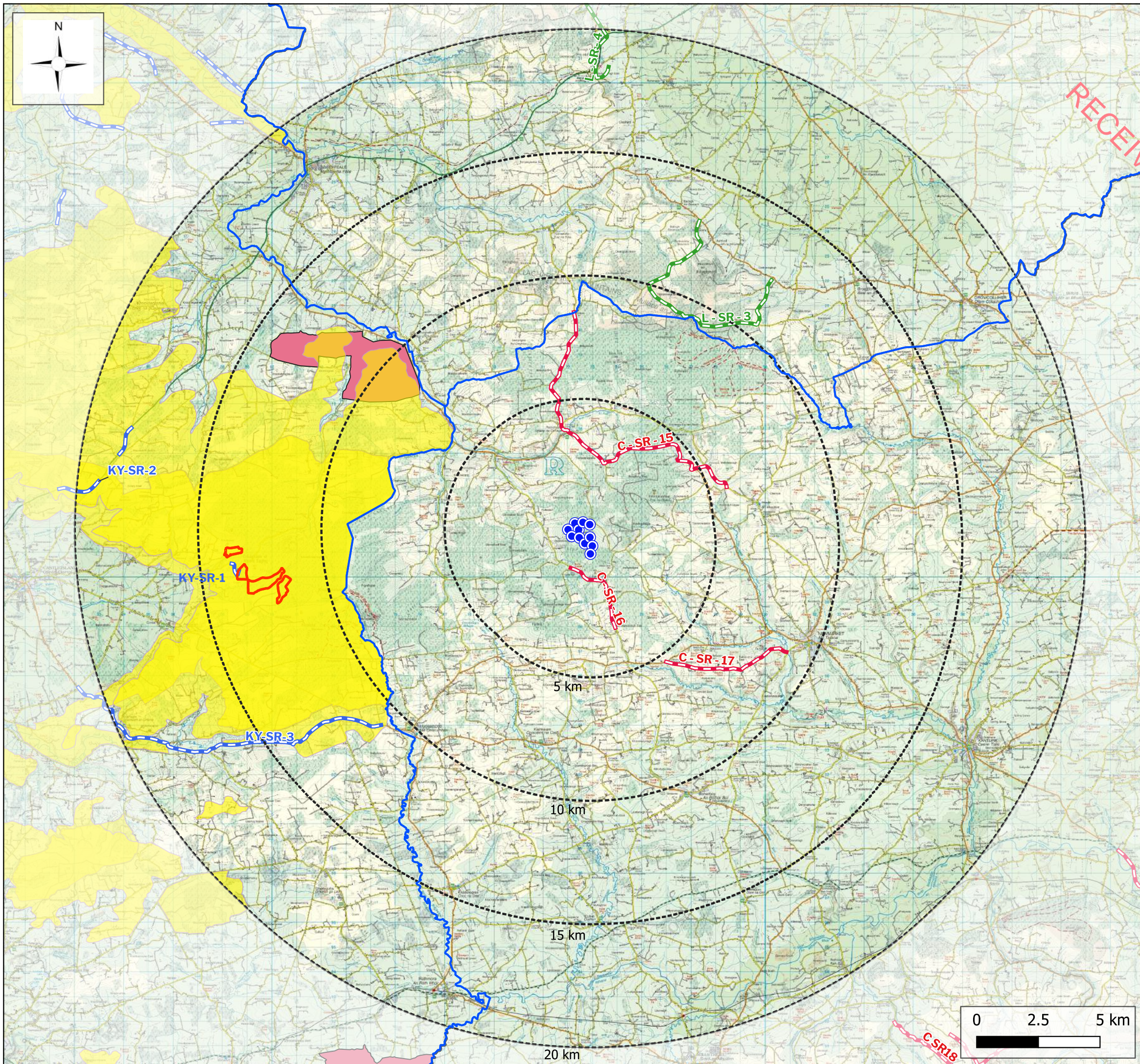
“Low sensitivity - landscapes are robust landscapes, which are tolerant to change, and which have the ability to accommodate development pressure. •

Medium sensitivity - landscapes can accommodate development pressure but with limitations in the scale and magnitude. In this rank of sensitivity, landscape elements can accept some changes while others are more vulnerable to change. •

High sensitivity - landscapes are vulnerable landscapes with the ability to accommodate limited development pressure. In this rank landscape quality is at a high level, landscape elements are highly sensitive to certain types of change. If pressure for development exceeds the landscape’s limitations the character of the landscape may change. •

Very high - sensitivity landscapes are extra vulnerable landscapes (e.g. seascape area with national importance) which are likely to be fragile and susceptible to change.”

As seen in Figure 13-5 the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located within a LCA 14a - *Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland*, which is classified as ‘**Medium**’ sensitivity in the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- County Borders
- Existing Taurbeg Turbines
- Proposed Offsetting Lands
- Co. Cork Scenic Routes
- Co. Limerick Views and prospects
- Co. Kerry Views and Prospects
- Co. Kerry Archaeological Landscapes
- Co. Kerry Visually Sensitive Areas

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-6

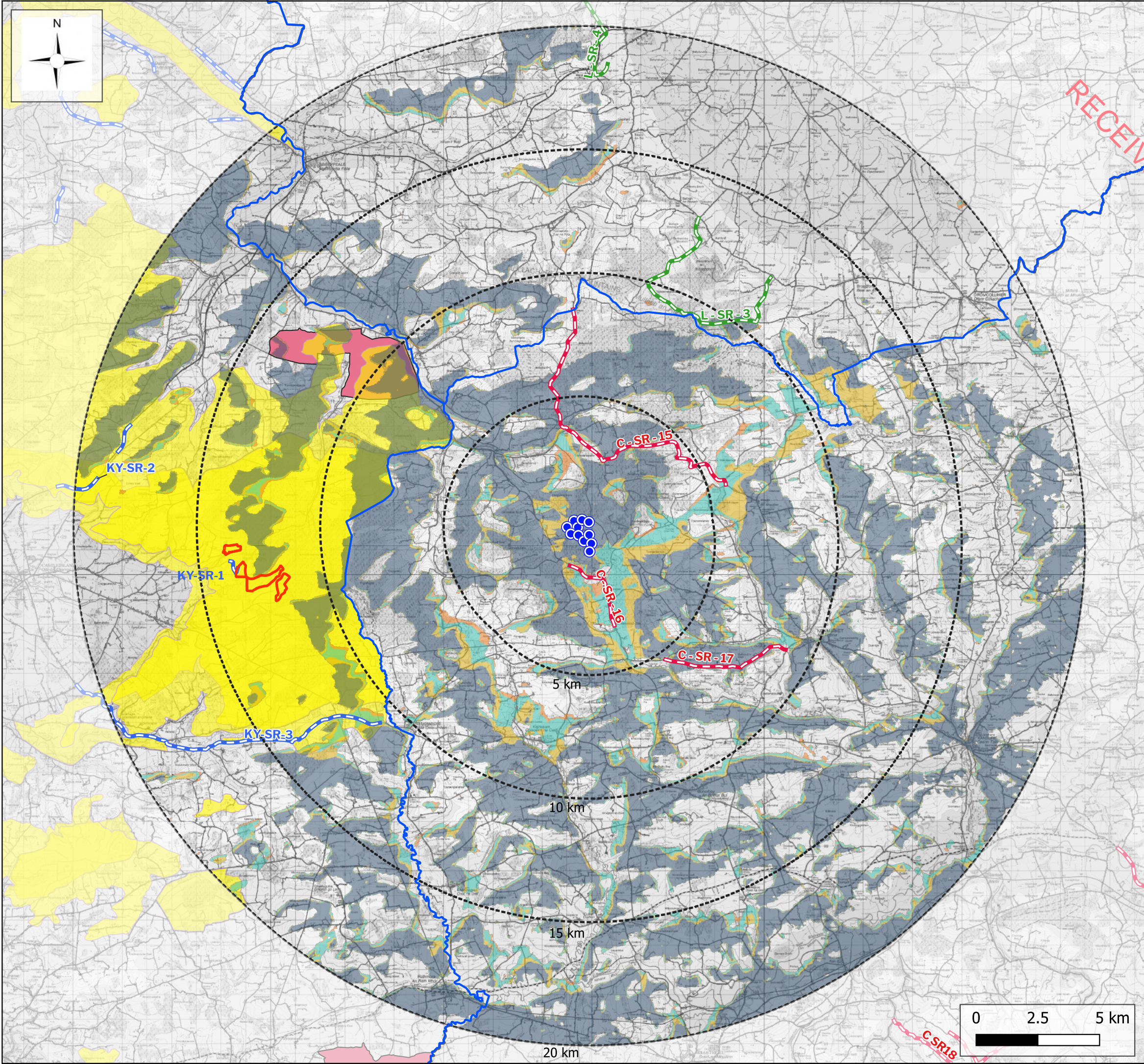
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Policy Context Map

Project Title

Taurbeg Wind Farm Extension of Operational Life

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:150,000	231030	17.06.2025	KC	JW



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- County Borders
- Existing Taurbeg Turbines
- Proposed Offsetting Lands
- Co. Cork Scenic Routes
- Co. Limerick Views and prospects
- Co. Kerry Views and Prospects
- Co. Kerry Archaeological Landscapes
- Co. Kerry Visually Sensitive Areas
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility**
 - 1-3 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 4-7 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 8-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 11 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-7

Drawing Title

Policy Context Map and ZTV

Project Title

Taurbeg Wind Farm Extension of Operational Life

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:150,000	231030	17.06.2025	KC	JW



13.4.1.1.3 Protected Views and Scenic Routes

The Landscape Character Assessment for County Cork states that “The County contains many vantage points from which views and prospects of great natural beauty may be obtained over both seascape and rural landscape.” The CCDP states that these protected views and scenic routes the “scenery and landscape are of enormous amenity value to residents and tourists and constitutes a valuable economic asset. The protection of this asset is therefore of primary importance in developing the potential of the County.” In light of this the CCDP contains the following policy related to protected views and scenic routes.

“County Development Plan Objective GI 14-12: General Views and Prospects

Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly sea views, river or lake views, views of unspoilt mountains, upland or coastal landscapes, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty as recognized in the Draft Landscape Strategy.

County Development Plan Objective GI 14-13: Scenic Routes

Protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes and in particular stretches of scenic routes that have very special views and prospects identified in this Plan. The scenic routes identified in this Plan are shown on the scenic amenity maps in the CDP Map Browser and are listed in Volume 2 Heritage and Amenity Chapter 5 Scenic Routes of this Plan.

County Development Plan Objective GI 14-14: Development on Scenic Routes

a) Require those seeking to carry out development in the environs of a scenic route and/or an area with important views and prospects, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse obstruction or degradation of the views towards and from vulnerable landscape features. In such areas, the appropriateness of the design, site layout, and landscaping of the proposed development must be demonstrated along with mitigation measures to prevent significant alterations to the appearance or character of the area.

b) Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes (See Chapter 16 Built and Cultural Heritage).

County Development Plan Objective GI 14-15: Development on the Approaches to Towns and Villages

Ensure that the approach roads to towns and villages are protected from inappropriate development, which would detract from the setting and historic character of these settlements.

There are three designated scenic routes within the LVIA Study Area. The existing Taurbeg turbines are visible from designated scenic route 15 and 17 as illustrated by ZTV mapping in Figure 13-7 (above) and validated during site visits. An assessment of the effects of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm from these scenic routes in the context of policy objectives GI 14-12 and GI 14-13 is reported in Section 13.7.2.2.2

In relation Objective GI 14-14, The *Photographic Visualisation Booklet* illustrates that the existing Taurbeg turbines are sited in a visually coherent design on a broad hilltop. There are limited views of the existing Taurbeg turbines from designated scenic routes due to the topography of narrow valleys throughout the wider landscape setting as shown in Section 13.5.1.2. Regarding Objective GI 14-15, there will be visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm from the approach road to Rockchapel which is the closest settlement to the Site. As seen in Plate 13-16 and viewpoint 1, the existing Taurbeg Wind

Farm is located in the background of the images and does not alter the setting and historic character of Rockchapel.

There are three Co. Cork designated Scenic Routes within the LVIA Study Area as shown on Figure 13-6 These are listed in Table 13-10 below.

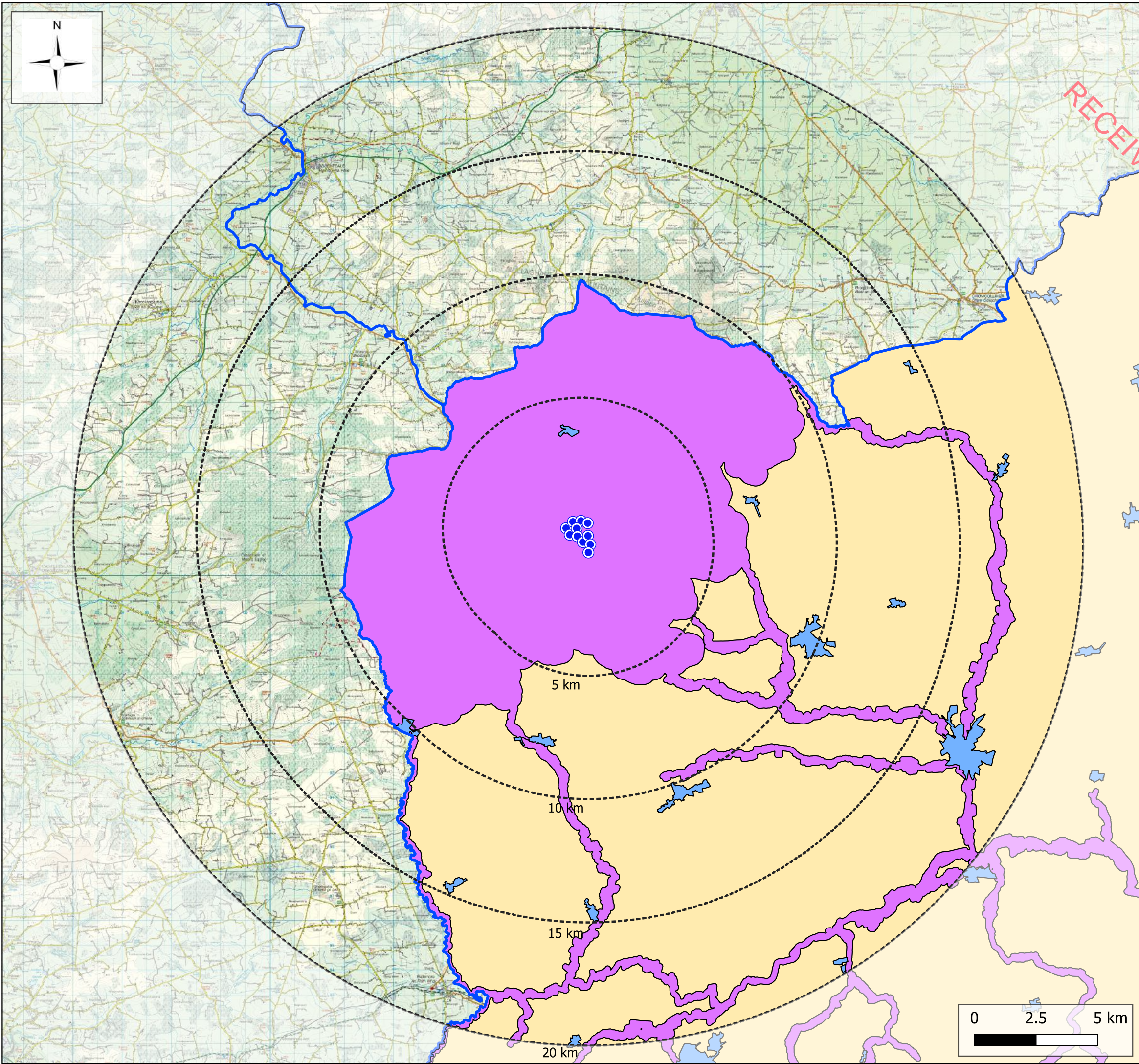
Table 13-10 County Cork Development Plan 2022-28 Designated Scenic Routes within the LVIA Study Area

Scenic Route	Does the Route adjoin a NHA, pNHA, SAC a SPA or SPA	Main Features of Land Cover	Description & General Views Being Protected	Key Characteristics of Land Use
S15	SAC	Poor scrub land, some improved grassland, forestry & wind farms	Local Road northwards from Meelin to Rockchapel to County Boundary Views of rolling upland landscape & the Feale River Valley	Coniferous forestry, settlement & wind farms
S16	No	Upland moor land scrub, coniferous forestry & some improved grassland	Local Road at Taur Views of rolling upland landscape	Settlement, one-off housing, subsistence farming & wind turbine
S17	SAC – Black Water River	Rough grazing land, improved grassland, settlement & rolling upland	Local Road West of Newmarket from Anne's Bridge to Blueford Crossroads. Views of rolling landscape & the Glenlara & Owenkeel River Valleys	Agriculture

13.4.1.1.4 Wind Energy Strategy

The Wind Energy Strategy (WES) for County Cork is set out in *Volume 1* of the CCDP in Section 13.6. According to 13.6.2 the current wind farm capacity in County Cork is 603MW, but to reach national targets the capacity is expected to expand to 1,100MW. The WES uses three classifications for the suitability of areas for wind energy developments in County Cork. The three classifications are as follows:

- Acceptable in Principle
- Open to Consideration
- Normally Discouraged



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- County Borders
- Existing Taurbeg Turbines
- Co. Cork Wind Energy Strategy**
- Acceptable in Principle
- Normally Discouraged
- Open to Consideration
- Urban Areas

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-8

Drawing Title

Co. Cork Wind Energy Strategy

Project Title

Taurbeg Wind Farm Extension of Operational Life

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Project No.

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Date

14.11.2024

Drawn By

KC

Checked By

JW



The existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located within an area classified as Normally Discouraged as seen in Figure 13-8 above. In the WES, these areas are defined as follows:

- **Acceptable in Principle** – *“Commercial wind energy development is normally encouraged in these areas subject to protection of residential amenity particularly in respect of noise, shadow flicker, visual impact and the requirements of the Habitats, Birds, Water Framework, Floods and EIA Directives and taking account of protected species of conservation concern.”*
- **Open to Consideration** – *“Commercial wind energy development is open to consideration in these areas where proposals can avoid adverse impacts on:*
 - *Residential amenity particularly in respect of noise, shadow flicker and visual impact.*
 - *Urban areas and Metropolitan/Town Green Belts.*
 - *Natura 2000 Sites (SPA’s and SAC’s), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA’s), proposed Natural Heritage Areas and other sites and locations of significant ecological value.*
 - *Architectural and archaeological heritage.*
 - *Visual quality of the landscape and the degree to which impacts are highly visible over wider areas.*

In planning such development, consideration should also be given to the cumulative impacts of such proposals.”

- **Normally Discouraged** - *“Commercial wind energy developments will be discouraged in these areas which are considered to be sensitive to adverse impacts associated with this form of development (either individually or in combination with other developments). Only in exceptional circumstances where it is clear that adverse impacts do not arise will proposals be considered.”*

The existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located within a “Normally Discouraged” area as seen in Figure 13-8. However this area has existing wind farms throughout the landscape, especially on upland areas. In addition, the landscape has been highly modified through agriculture, coniferous forestry and historic peat harvesting.

Section 13.6.3 of the CCDP 2022-28 sets out the wind strategy based on the following guidelines and a number of key policy considerations as follows:

- *“The approach taken by other adjoining Local Authorities (Kerry, Limerick, South Tipperary, and Waterford) to Wind Energy in their respective County Development Plans. Of particular importance are the instances where adjoining Counties have adopted a policy discouraging wind energy projects.*
- *The location of all existing and proposed wind energy developments and their cumulative impacts.*
- *The pattern of population distribution, so that the main centres of population can be avoided.*
- *Accessibility to the electricity distribution grid.*
- *Important or high value landscapes.*
- *Nature conservations sites and in particular Natura 2000 sites (SPA and SAC).*
- *The Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans for the County, so that impacts on the rivers, lakes and other waterbodies of the County could be avoided.*
- *The Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) Wind Atlas, 2003 was utilised to identify areas with viable wind speeds.”*

The following objective is included in the CCDDP in relation to wind energy

“ET 14-4: Wind Energy”

In order to facilitate increased levels of renewable energy production consistent with national targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation as set out in the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030, the Climate Action Plan 2021, and any updates to these targets, and in accordance with Ministerial Guidelines on Wind Energy Development, the Council will support further development of on-shore wind energy projects including the upgrading, repowering or expansion of existing infrastructure, at appropriate locations within the county in line with the Wind Energy Strategy and objectives detailed in this chapter and other objectives of this plan in relation to climate change, biodiversity, landscape, heritage, water management and environment etc.”

As mentioned in Section 13.4.1.1.1, the Draft Landscape Strategy 2007 for Co. Cork and previous county development plans designated LCT 14a as a ‘strategic area’ for wind. The existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is located on a landscape designated as medium sensitivity which is not currently designated as ‘important’ or ‘high value’ landscape. It is therefore reasoned that the ‘Normally Discouraged’ designation is not attributed to the Landscape sensitivity. The primary reason for this area to be designated as ‘Normally Discouraged’ in the current Cork wind energy strategy is likely attributed to the designation of nature conservation sites in this area. Effects on designated conservation sites are addressed in Chapter 6 – *Biodiversity*.

13.4.1.2 Landscape and Visual Designations and Relevant Policy of Other Counties within the LVIA Study Area – Kerry and Limerick

13.4.1.2.1 Co. Kerry

Landscape Sensitivity

Section 11.6 of the KCDP 2022-28 discusses objectives in relation to landscape and visual designations. Section 11.6.2 discusses the objectives in relation to landscape sensitivity and are listed below.

KCDP 11-76

“Have regard to any future National Landscape Character Assessment, Regional Landscape Assessments and Landscape Character Map, and the publication of Section 28 Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment.”

KCDP 11-77

“Protect the landscapes of the County as a major economic asset and an invaluable amenity which contributes to the quality of people’s lives.”

KCDP 11-78

“Protect the landscapes of the County by ensuring that any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area. Any development which could unduly impact upon such landscapes will not be permitted.”

The landscape sensitivity of County Kerry’s landscapes is discussed as part of the landscape character areas. A preliminary analysis in Section 13.4.4.1 scopes in or out LCAs which will be assessed further in Section 13.7.2.1.2.

‘Visually Sensitive Areas’ are identified in Section 11.6.3.1 of KCDP 2022-28. They are large, landscape scale areas of County Kerry where planning and development must be appropriately balanced with the unique and distinctive landscape and visual sensitivities of the county. The Visually Sensitive Areas in the LVIA Study Area are mapped previously with the ZTV in Figure 13-7. As shown in the ZTV, there is very limited theoretical visibility of the Existing Taurbeg turbines in these Visually Sensitive Areas.

The Proposed Offsetting Measures include permanent removal of forestry and restoration of farmland for the benefit of hen harrier in lands located within a Visually Sensitive Area. The Proposed Offsetting Measures are located approximately 12km to the west of the Existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. Effects of the Proposed Project on the ‘Visually Sensitive Areas of the landscape in the LVIA Study Area will be assessed in terms of landscape and visual effects and discussed further in relation to the Proposed Offsetting Measures lands in Section 13.7.2.3.

Views and Prospects

Section 11.6.5 of the KCDP 2022-28 discusses the objectives in relation to views and prospects, which are listed below.

KCDP 11-79

“Preserve the views and prospects as defined on Maps contained in Volume 4.”

KCDP 11-80

“Facilitate the sustainable development of existing and the identification of new Viewing Points along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, while ensuring the protection of environmental attributes in the area through the implementation of environmental protection objectives, standards and guidelines of this Plan.”

KCDP 11-81

“Prohibit developments that have a material effect on views designated in this plan from the public road or greenways towards scenic features and/or public areas.”

Three Designated Scenic Routes from the KCDP 2022-28 are located within the LVIA Study Area and shown on Figure 13-6. There is no theoretical visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm from these three designated scenic routes as illustrated in Figure 13-7. They are therefore scoped out from further assessment in this LVIA.

Archaeological Landscapes

Section 8.3.2 of the KCDP 2022-28 discusses the ‘Archaeological Landscapes’ and the objectives in relation to these landscapes.

KCDP 8-28

“Ensure the active protection of the 19 identified, significant archaeological landscapes outlined in Volume 3 with particular emphasis on the landscape settings, views to and from the landscapes and monument/feature inter-visibility within these landscapes.”

There is one ‘Archaeological Landscape’ within the LVIA Study Area as seen in Figure 13-7. Volume 3, Section 4 – *Archaeological Landscapes*, states that the archaeological landscape within the LVIA Study area, which is of regional significance is the:

“Largest ecclesiastical enclosure in the county, hengiform earthwork, large hilltop enclosure overlooking the Feale, fulachtaí fiadh, enclosures. Evidence suggest that this was an important landscape from prehistoric times into the medieval period, located as it is on the natural territorial boundary formed by the Feale. Evidence suggests activity from the Early Bronze Age to the Medieval period.”

The physical fabric of the ‘Archaeological Landscape’ is not altered by the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. There is very limited theoretical visibility within the designated ‘Archaeological Landscape’. Site visits determined there is even less actual visibility. The existing Taurbeg turbines are setback from the ‘Archaeological Landscape’, and do not alter the setting of this landscape. The Archaeological landscapes will not be discussed further in this chapter.

13.4.1.2.2 Co. Limerick

Landscape Character Areas

Section 6.4.1 – *Landscape Assessment and Landscape Character Areas* of the LDP 2022-28 outlines the policy in relation to LCAs in Co. Limerick

Policy EH P8 – Landscape Character Areas

“It is a policy of the Council to promote the distinctiveness and where necessary safeguard the sensitivity of Limerick’s landscape types, through the landscape characterisation process in accordance with the Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000) as issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention) and with A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – 2015/2025. The Council shall implement any relevant recommendations contained in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht’s National Landscape Strategy for Ireland, 2015 – 2025.”

The LCAs of Co. Limerick are illustrated on Figure 13-5. Section 13.4.4.1 of this Chapter scopes in or out LCAs which will be assessed further in Section 13.7.2.1.2.

Views and Prospects

Section 6.4.2 of the LDP 2022-28 outlines the policy in relation to views and Prospects. The Views and Prospects are shown in Map 6.2 – *Views and Prospects* of the LDP 2022-28 and are reproduced in Figure 13-6 of this Chapter.

Objective EH O31 – Views and Prospects

- a) *“Preserve, protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests and to prevent development, which would block or otherwise interfere with views and/or prospects.*
- b) *In areas where scenic views and prospects are listed in the Plan, there will be a presumption against development, except that required to facilitate farming and appropriate tourism and related activities. The development must be appropriately designed so that it can be integrated into the landscape.”*

There are two designated scenic routes within the LVIA Study Area in County Limerick. Limerick scenic route 3 (See Figure 13-7) has a stretch of approximately 2.2km within an area zones as full theoretical visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm out of approximately 11.2 km of designated scenic route 3. Actual visibility determined there is no visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm considering the coniferous forestry and Dromdeeveen Wind Farm are obstructing views of Taurbeg Wind Farm. As for designated scenic route 4, there is no theoretical visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. Therefore, the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm will not alter the setting and visual sensitivity

of the Designated Scenic Routes. The Co. Limerick Designated Scenic Routes will not be discussed further in this Chapter

13.4.2 Landscape Character of the Wind Farm Site

Landscape character refers to the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how people perceive this. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement, and creates the particular sense of place found in different areas. The identification of landscape character as outlined in the *Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities Guidelines* (DoELG, 2000) comprises the identification of primarily physical units (areas defined by landform and landcover) and, where appropriate, of visual units.

The Site was visited during 2023 and 2024 where a preliminary analysis of topography, drainage, landcover and land use was conducted in conjunction with other LVIA surveys. Information gathered during these visits along with desk-based studies have informed the following site descriptions. The Site is deemed to be of **'Low'** sensitivity. The following subsections will provide outline why the Site is of low sensitivity through figures and images captured during site surveys.

Land Cover and Land Use

Landcover is the term used to describe the combinations of vegetation and land use that cover the land surface. It comprises the more detailed constituent parts of the landscape and encompasses both natural and human-made features. The landcover of the Site can be seen in Figure 13-9 below.

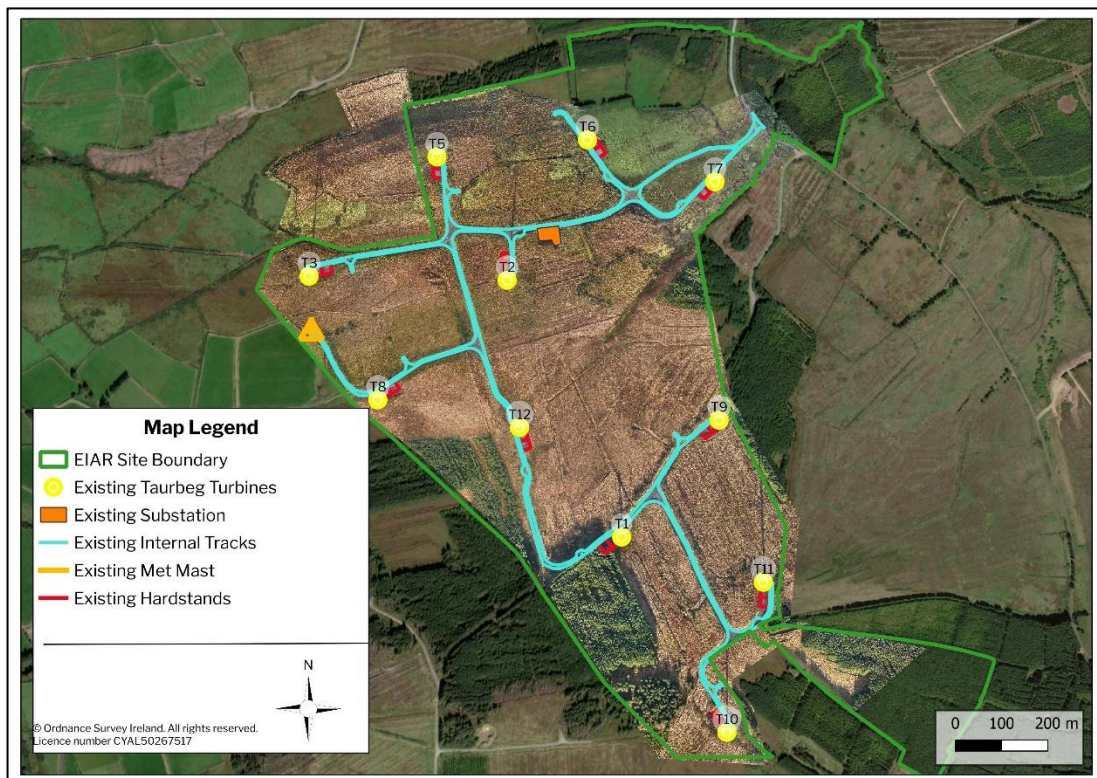


Figure 13-9 Drone Orthomosaic of the Existing Taurbeg Wind Farm

Figure 13-9 above illustrates the landcover and land use of the Site captured from a drone survey carried out in 2024. The landcover primarily consists of the infrastructure of the existing wind farm, peatland, marshy grassland, and coniferous forestry. There is a small area of agriculture fields between

T6 and T7 to the north of the Site. Plate 13-1 and Plate 13-2 below shows that the majority of the landcover within the Site consists of peatland.



Plate 13-1 Existing Taurbeg Turbines among Peatlands and Coniferous Forestry



Plate 13-2 Peatlands within the Site.

Commercial forestry surrounds the Site to the south, southwest and areas to the east as seen in Plate 13-3, Plate 13-4 and Plate 13-5 below.



Plate 13-3 Coniferous Forestry Located to the Southeast of the Existing Taurbeg Wind Farm



Plate 13-4 Coniferous Forestry Located to the West of the Existing Taurbeg Wind Farm



Plate 13-5 View towards Existing Turbine T9 showing Coniferous Forestry behind the Structure at the East of the Site

Plate 13-6 shows agricultural fields within the Site. This is also evident in Figure 13-9, where the agricultural fields are located between T6 and T7.



Plate 13-6 Fields Used for Pastural Lands to the West of the Site

Landform and Drainage

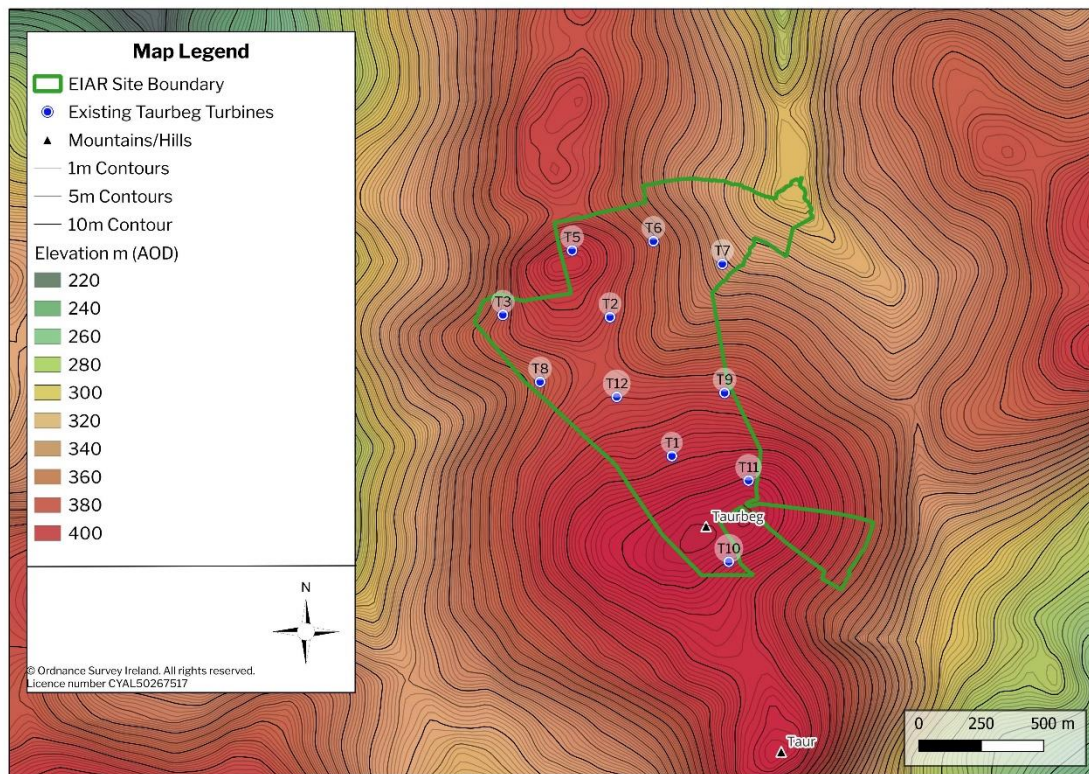


Figure 13-10 Topography of the Site

Figure 13-10 above shows the topography of the Site, which is a broad plateau of upland between two peaks near turbine T5 to the north and turbine T10 to the south, which can be seen in Plate 13-7. Much of the Site is approximately 370 metres AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) and the highest level is in the southern part of the Site at 405 metres AOD.



Plate 13-7 Drainage Ditches seen throughout the Existing Wind Farm Site.

Views within the Wind Farm Site

The Site is generally a large, remote enclosed landscape. Views within the Site itself are generally contained by the coniferous forestry enclosing the Site to the southwest and parts of the east, as well as the surrounding landform characteristics. To the east of the Site, there are open views onto the Knockacummer Windfarm. Plate 13-8 shows views from the south of the Site on an elevated point facing north.



Plate 13-8 Views from the South to the North from an Elevated Vantage Point Within the Wind Farm Site

38 kV Substation

The existing substation is located in the centre of the Site. The substation as seen below in Plate 13-9 and is located on a flat plateau enclosed by coniferous forestry and undulating landforms within the Site. The substation is visible from Knockacummer Wind Farm to the northeast of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. There is no visibility of the existing substation from sensitive receptors outside the Site.



Plate 13-9 Views Northeast towards the On-site Substation

13.4.3 Landscape Character of the Proposed Offsetting Lands

The Proposed Offsetting Measures lands are located approximately 12km west of the existing Taurbeg wind farm. These Proposed Offsetting lands are located in an upland landscape south of the existing Mount Eagle Wind Farm in Co. Kerry. They comprise four parcels of land as shown in Figure 13-11 below. Three of the land parcels comprise commercial forestry and are located at high elevation on the southern slopes of Mount Eagle. One area of the Proposed Offsetting lands comprises an agricultural field currently used as pasture for livestock. The character of the Proposed Offsetting lands has been highly influenced and modified by the previous and existing land uses of commercial forestry and agriculture.

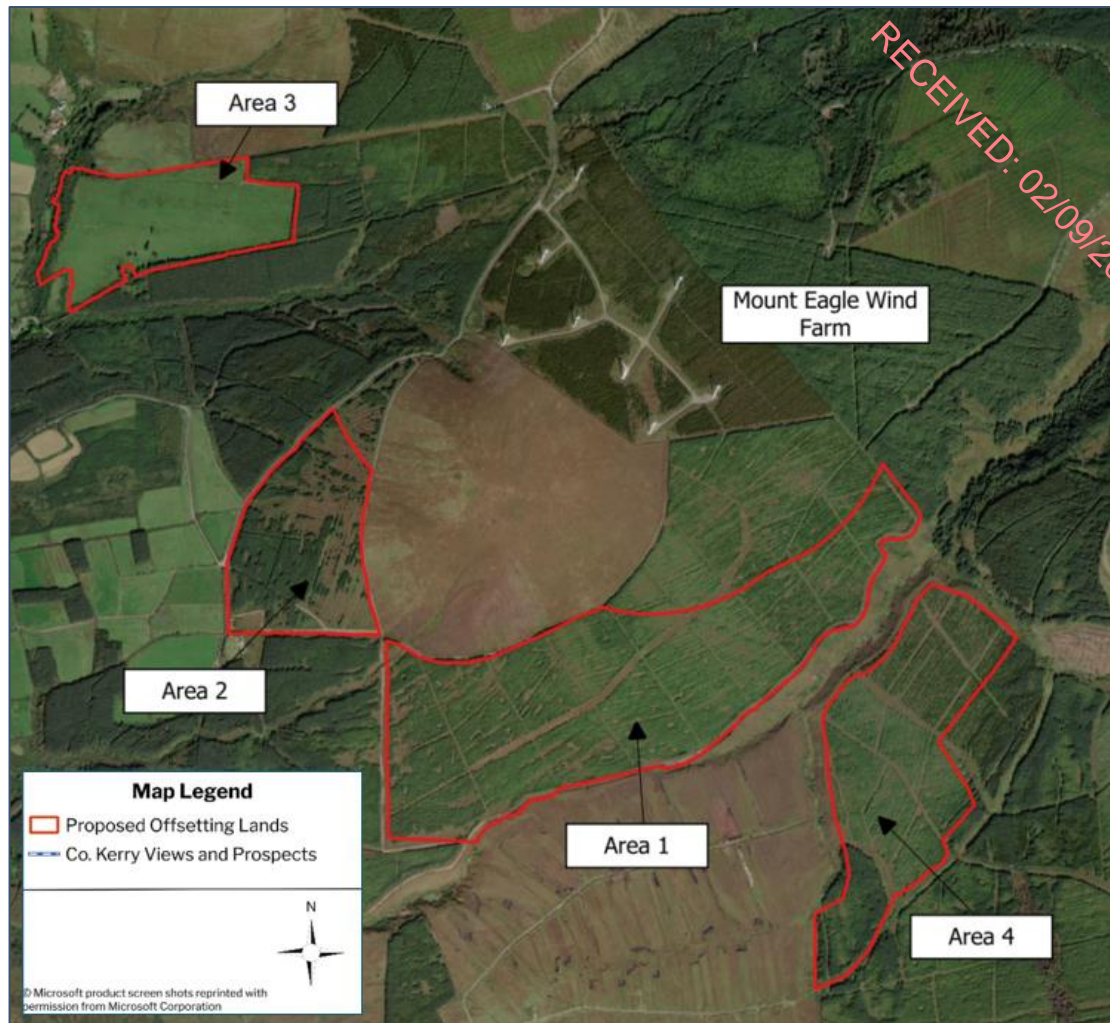


Figure 13-11 Proposed Offsetting Lands

The Proposed Offsetting Measures include restoration of Hen Harrier habitat in the four areas of land shown in the map above, delineated by the red line. Measures for the agricultural field to the northwest (Area 3) include implementation of a rotational grazing scheme, planting of wildlife seed crop, hedgerow enhancement, scrub planting, cessation of fertiliser application and predator fencing. It is also proposed to permanently remove commercial forestry in Areas 1, 2 and 4. This will create more biodiverse upland habitat for foraging hen harrier. Areas of patchy scrub will be planted in Areas 1 and 4 in order to create a diversity of vegetation structures to provide cover and resources for hen harrier prey species. A detailed description of the Proposed Offsetting Measures are included in Appendix 7-7.

The Proposed Offsetting lands are located within an area designated as visually sensitive in KCDP; this designation is discussed previously in Section 13.4.1.2.1. As shown in Figure 13-11, designated Scenic Route KY-SR-1 is located on the western slopes of Mount Eagle adjacent to two areas of the Proposed Offsetting lands. There are long ranging views across the landscape to the west from this designated scenic route. The high quality scenic amenity from this route is focused in the opposite direction of the Proposed Offsetting lands. Effects arising due to the proposed changes to the Proposed Offsetting lands are assessed on the scenic amenity of designated KY-SR-1 and the character of the visually sensitive landscapes areas in section 13.7.2.3

Although the Proposed Offsetting lands are located in an area designated as visually sensitive, the sensitivity of the of the Proposed Offsetting lands is **Low**, due to the landscape being modified for commercial forestry and agriculture.

13.4.4

Landscape Character of the Wider Landscape Setting

The immediate surrounding area of the Site consists of an undulating rural landscape of the Mullaghareirk Mountains comprising agricultural lands, coniferous forestry and existing wind farms as seen in Plate 13-10 below.



Plate 13-10 View northwest towards the Existing Taurbeg Wind Farm Overlooking the Agricultural Landscape

The landscape to the south and southeast of the site and Mullaghareirk range is designated as LCT 11 - *Broad Marginal Middleground Valleys*. This area features a relatively even terrain within the broad, shallow valley of the River Blackwater. The river is fed by tributaries flowing from higher ground to the north and south. At elevated points, the land rises steeply into a more mountainous landscape, while at lower levels, it transitions into gently sloping, fertile fields. The land is generally of marginal agricultural quality, consisting of small to medium-sized fields bordered by mixed broadleaf hedgerows. Dairy farming dominates the land use, with farmsteads and individual houses scattered across the area.

The landscape to the north of the LVIA Study Area is designated as LCA 07 - *Southern Uplands*, in the LDP 2022-28. The Mullaghareirk range, spanning the borders of County Limerick, Cork, and Kerry, serves as the defining feature of this landscape character area. This gently undulating range rises to an almost plateau-like formation near the Cork border. The vegetation varies from improved hill grasslands, often wet in nature, to disturbed peatland habitats such as blanket bog, and dry and wet heath. These habitats are largely fragmented, appearing in patches disrupted by commercial forestry and improved grasslands. Commercial forestry, much of which is approaching maturity, is a prominent characteristic of the region.

The west of the LVIA Study Area is made of separate and distinct narrow valleys such as Mount Eagle and Upper Clydagh River Valley. Tralee and Castleisland Valley, and The Brown Flesk River Valley. Ridges to the west of the LVIA Study Area are dissected by a number of river valleys. Pasture is the main landcover as one moves further east in the LVIA Study Area, while the eastern side is marked by forestry and peat bogs. A similar landscape pattern is observed in the western part, mirroring the area's topography. LCA 23 - River *Blackwater and Rathmore* lies parallel to the River Blackwater, which defines the eastern boundary with County Cork. The northern boundary is marked by high terrain and largely follows the route of the R577. Barna, rising to 320 meters, defines the northwest corner of the LCA.

Rockchapel is a small village located approximately 3.5km to the north of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. Rockchapel is located within a narrow valley between Taurbeg hill and Bronseen hill. On site appraisals determined there is no visibility from within this valley due to the steep incline of Taurbeg hill, as is addressed in the following section Visual Baseline. The largest settlements in the LVIA Study Area, Newmarket and Kanturk, are located to the southwest of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. Smaller settlements are located beyond 5km within County Cork including Ballydesmond,

Knocknagree and Boherboy. The townlands of Glasheenanargid to the west, Foiladaun to the northwest and Taur to the south consist of small rural clusters of residential dwellings within 3km of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. The existing Taurbeg Wind Farm is in a rural area and surrounded by a network of small local roads. The regional road R576 travels from the northwest through Rockchapel connecting it to Newmarket and Kanturk. The national road, N72 located to the south of the LVIA Study Area travels in east-west orientation. Other notable transport routes within county Cork in the LVIA Study Area include the regional roads R578, R579 and the R580. For the most part, the transport routes are located within the small narrow valleys which have limited theoretical visibility. Section 13.5.1 discusses visibility from the receptors listed above where theoretical visibility occurs.

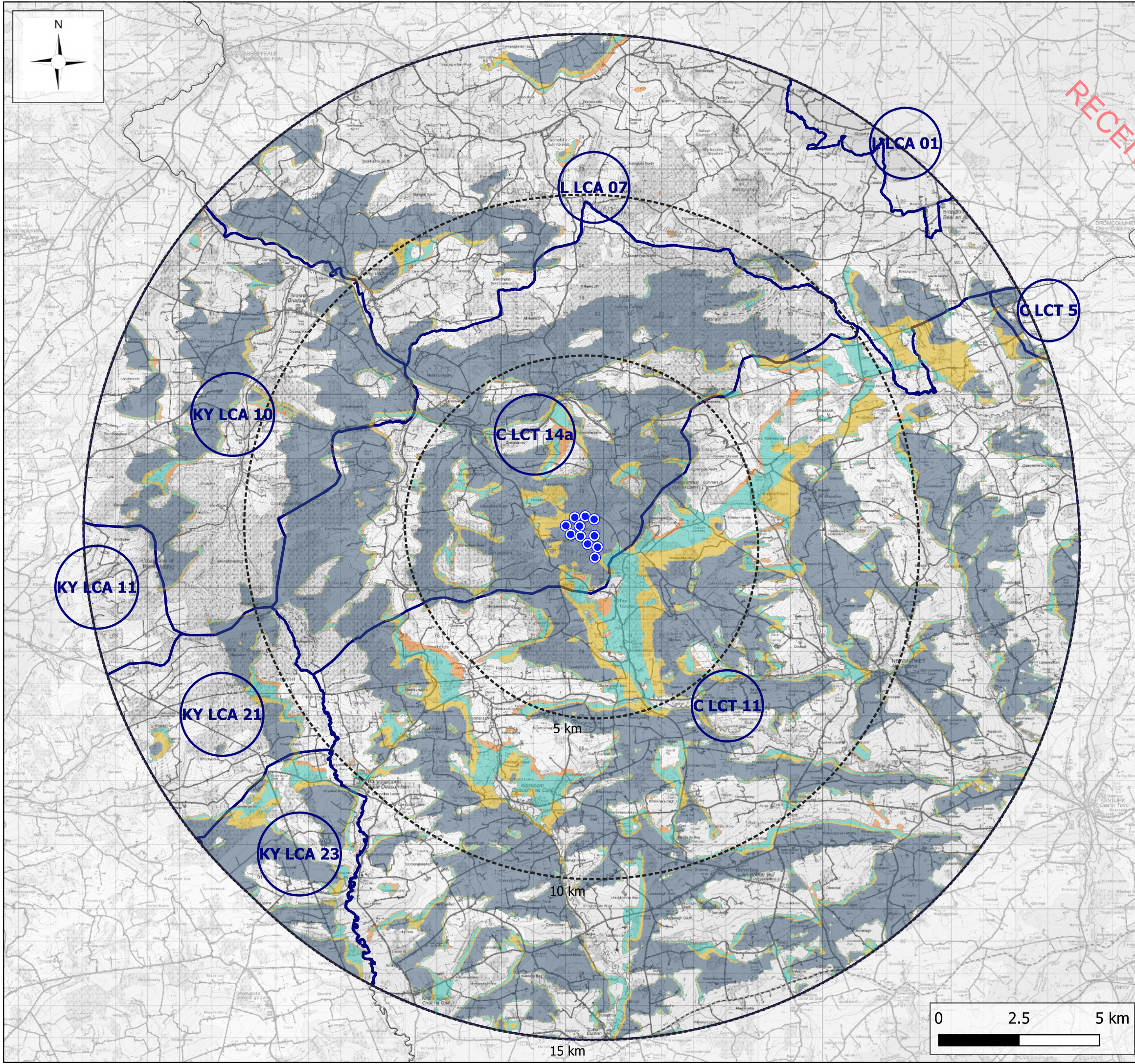
13.4.4.1 Designated Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

As noted in Section 13.2.1, the LVIA Study Area for assessment of landscape character extends to 15km from the existing turbines. In the previous section - Landscape Designations and Policy Context, 9 No. designated LCAs were identified within 15km of the existing turbines, in Counties Cork, Kerry and Limerick.

LCA Preliminary Analysis

A map showing all LCAs within 15km and the distribution of theoretical visibility of the existing turbines occurring in each LCA is shown in Figure 13-12 shown below.

Each LCA is listed below in Table 13-11 as well as a description of theoretical visibility within each LCA, as indicated by the ZTV in Figure 13-12. Several LCAs identified in the LCA Study Area (15km for landscape character) have very small areas of theoretical visibility indicated by the ZTV map in Figure 13-12 and very small portions of these LCAs are located within the 15km LCA Study Area. The potential visibility of the existing turbines was appraised during site surveys (multiple surveys conducted during 2023, and 2024) from all LCAs with very limited or partial theoretical visibility. The ZTV and on-site visibility appraisals determines which LCAs are Scoped in for full assessment later in this Chapter, this is reported below.



Map Legend

--- LVIA Study Area - 15km for assessment of effects on designated LCAs

● Existing Taurbeg Turbines

Co. Cork Designated LCAs

- C-LCT-11 Broad Marginal Middleground Valleys
- C-LCT-5 Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge
- C-LCT-14a Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland

Co. Limerick Designated LCAs

- L LCA 01 - Agricultural Lowlands
- L LCA 07 - Southern Uplands

Co. Kerry Designated LCAs

- KY-LCA-10 Mount Eagle and Upper Clydagh River Valley
- KY-LCA-23 River Blackwater and Rathmore
- KY-LCA-21 The Brown Flesk River Valley
- KY-LCA-11 Tralee and Castleisland Valley

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 1-3 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 4-7 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 8-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 11 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-12

Drawing Title

LCAs with ZTV Map

Project Title

Taurbeg Wind Farm Extension of Operational Life

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:115,000	231030	23.02.2025	KC	JW

Table 13-11 Preliminary LCA Analysis Table

Map Ref	LCA	Theoretical Visibility (TV) as indicated by ZTV	Actual Visibility	Scoped in for Assessment
Up to 5km				
C LCT 14a	Fissured Marginal and Forested Rolling Upland	Within 5km there is mainly full theoretical visibility with large areas of no theoretical visibility. There is reduced theoretical visibility between 5 and 10km. The majority of the theoretical visibility is on the peaks of upland areas surrounding the Site.	There is very limited actual visibility outside 5km due to coniferous forestry and the high elevations surrounding the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. There is actual visibility on higher elevated vantage points such as north of Rockchapel. Within the narrow lower elevated valleys there is no visibility due to the steep incline of the surrounding landforms.	Yes
C LCT 11	Broad Marginal Middle ground Valleys	Within 5km there is mainly partial theoretical visibility with large areas of no visibility. To the southwest within 5km there is an area of higher elevation will full theoretical visibility. Outside of 5km the full theoretical visibility is reduced and very patchy.	There is limited visibility due to Taur hill, foulard hill and Knockacummer hill visually screening views from large areas of the LCT. There is visibility at higher elevated vantage points in limited areas.	Yes
5 to 10km				
KY LCA 10	Mount Eagle and Upper Clydagh River Valley	There is nearly full theoretical visibility within 10km to the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. There are large areas from 10 to 15km of no theoretical visibility.	Considering the large areas of coniferous forestry and field patterns to northwest of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm, there is very limited actual visibility towards the Site from within this LCA. Any visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm within this	Yes

			LCA is from local roads and residential receptors located approximately 6.8km from the Site.	
KY LCA 21	The Brown Flesk River Valley	There is a small stretch of full theoretical visibility from Cordal wind farm and Mount Eagle Bog which are located on upland areas of modified landscapes.	There is very limited actual visibility of the existing Taurbeg wind farm from this LCA due to the upland areas of Doctor's Hill and Forehane partially screening the existing Taurbeg turbines	No - considering there is very limited actual and theoretical visibility from within this LCA as described.
L LCA 07	Southern Uplands	There is very little full theoretical visibility from within this LCA. The majority of the full theoretical visibility is to the northwest around the settlement of Caherhayes and the townlands of Mountcollins Upper and Reenagillee. There are small areas of full theoretical visibility on the local road going through Dromdeeven wind farm.	There is very limited actual visibility. Elevated vantage points such as the townland of Acres as seen in Plate 13-15 and the settlement (has no designation within the LCDP) has visibility of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm.	Yes
10 to 15km				
C LCT 5	Fertile Plain with Moorland Ridge	There is very limited theoretical visibility within this LCT.	There is no actual visibility from this LCT considering the distance to the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm, the tall tree lines and hedgerows lining the field patterns obstruct any views of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm.	No - There is a very small section of the LCT within the LCA Study Area. There is very limited visibility within this LCT.
KY LCA 11	Tralee and Castleisland Valley	There is primarily no ZTV within this LCA.	There is limited actual visibility occurs within this LCA considering Mount Eagle is obstructing any views of the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm.	No - There is very little theoretical visibility within the LCA and there is there is

				very limited actual visibility.
KY LCA 23	River Blackwater and Rathmore	The ZTV is disjointed and irregular within this LCA.	There is actual visibility from an unnamed local road to the northeast within this LCA that is located on an elevated vantage point. Coniferous forestry and vegetation on the R577 Regional Road and local roads within the LCA have no actual visibility.	No - considering the setback distance of this LCA, there is very limited actual visibility within the LCA. There is an unnamed local road with open views towards the existing Taurbeg Wind Farm. However, the existing Taurbeg turbines are located in the background and will have no significant impacts on the LCA
L LCA 01	Agricultural Lowlands	There is no theoretical visibility within this LCA	There is no actual visibility within this LCA	No

An impact assessment of the effects on the 4 No, LCTs scoped in for assessment in the table above are included in Section 13.7 -*Likely and Significant Landscape and Visual Effects*.

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CH.13 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

END OF PART 2