CHAPTER 12

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2025

QUARRY CONSULTING

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 12: Landscape and Visual

Introduction

12.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) chapter describes the landscape context of the proposed development and assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts of the proposal on the receiving environment.

12.2 **Landscape Impact Assessment (LIA)** relates to assessing the effects of a development on the landscape as a resource in its own right and is concerned with how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character.

12.3 **Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)** relates to assessing effects of a development on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people. This deals with how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements. Visual impacts may occur from; Visual Obstruction (blocking of a view, be it full, partial or intermittent) or; Visual Intrusion (interruption of a view without blocking).

Legislative and Policy Context

12.4 This assessment has been carried out with reference to the following legalisation, policy and guidelines:

Legislation

- Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (hereafter referred to as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive).
- The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, includes a definition of landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors[1]". The Act also includes a requirement that objectives relating to landscape should be included in development plans.
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.
- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- European Landscape Convention 2000 - Ireland ratified the European Landscape Convention in 2002. The Convention promotes the protection, management and planning of landscapes.

Policy

- Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.
- Galway Landscape Character Assessment, May 2021.

[1]Defined In Article 1a of the European Landscape Convention

- National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 - published "to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change".

Guidelines

- Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute, August 2024.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (hereafter referred to as the EPA Guidelines) (EPA 2022);
- The Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Assessing landscape value outside national designations (May 2021).
- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Specified Infrastructure Projects - Overarching Technical Document, Document No. PEENV- 01101), December 2020.
- Landscape Institute – Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals (2019) (under review April 2025).
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GEIA) (DHPLG 2018).
- Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 05/2017 (Revised 2018) on Townscape Character Assessment (hereafter referred to as the TCA) (Landscape Institute 2018).
- Environmental impact assessment of projects - Guidance on the preparation of the environmental impact assessment report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) (2017), European Commission.
- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (hereafter referred to as the GLVIA) 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013).
- DOE Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines (June 2000).

12.5 While the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) provide a general methodology, impact ratings and assessment structure applicable across all environmental assessments, the GLVIA (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013) provides specific guidance for landscape and visual impact assessments. A combination of the approaches outlined in the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) and in the GLVIA (Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013), and the professional experience and expertise of the assessor, is utilised in the landscape and visual assessment.

Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Assessment Methodology

12.6 The methodology for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment comprised:

- Identification of the study area.
- Desktop study to identify the relevant landscape designations in the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 as well as any potential scenic routes, views and prospects.

- Desktop study to identify the relevant Landscape Character Areas and Types set out in the Galway Landscape Character Assessment, May 2021.
- Desktop study to identify other sensitive visual receptors, including the relationship of the site to sites designated for nature conservation, national parks, designated landscapes, heritage sites, geological sites, protected structures, recreational and tourist areas and residential developments.
- Provisional identification of viewpoints based on results of desktop survey.
- Fieldwork to review and verify the desktop analysis of landscape character and to refine the set of viewpoints to be used for the visual assessment stage.
- Fieldwork to identify the landscape elements present on the site and within the study area.
- Use of full Frame Sensor camera with 50mm lens to capture visualisation from each selected viewpoint. Where a panorama is necessary to accurately represent the extent of a development, images are stitched together using photoshop.
- Assessment of the significance of the landscape impact of the development as a function of landscape sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the landscape impact.
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the development as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact. This aspect of the assessment is supported by photomontages prepared in respect of the selected viewpoints.
- Where appropriate, incorporation of mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts and estimation of residual impacts once mitigation has become established.

Landscape Assessment Impact Criteria

12.7 'Landscape' was defined in the European Landscape Convention (October 2000) as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*". This takes into account landform, landcover, land use, settlement patterns, boundary treatments and the overall scale of the landscape. The character that is created by these elements may be affected by the viewpoint, the context of the viewer, the season and the tranquillity of the setting (e.g noise & disturbance). How these elements interact defines the intrinsic landscape character of a place. Understanding the character, quality and value of the landscape determines the sensitivity of that landscape to accommodate change through development. Landscape impact assessment therefore identifies the changes to this character which would result from the proposed development and assesses the significance of those effects on the landscape.

12.8 When assessing the potential impacts on the landscape resulting from a proposed development, the following criteria are utilised:

- Sensitivity of Landscape to Change.
- Magnitude of landscape effects.
- Significance of landscape effects.

12.9 The sensitivity of the landscape to change is assessed by considering the degree to which a particular landscape receptor (Landscape Character Area (LCA) or landscape element) can accommodate changes without detrimental effects to its essential characteristics and the value attached to those elements. The value attached to a landscape is assessed informed by Table 1 of Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2/21, which takes into account factors such

as natural heritage, cultural heritage, landscape condition, associations, distinctiveness, recreational value, scenic value, tranquillity and function. The Sensitivity of Landscape to Change is classified using the criteria set out in Table 12-1

Table 12-1: Sensitivity of Landscape to Change

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a very low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at an international or national level (World Heritage Site/National Park), Landscape Conservation Areas, Special Area Amenity Order (SAAO), dark sky reserve landscapes, historic townscapes or tourist destinations as well as designated ecological landscapes (SAC, SPA, NHA, pNHA, etc where the principal management objectives are likely to be protection of the existing character.
High	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a low capacity for change in the form of development. Examples of which are high value landscapes, protected at a national or regional level, containing nationally important (and in some cases regionally important) historical, ecological and socio-cultural features and where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character. Examples include Community, sports, and recreational landscapes which cannot be replaced locally. Notable high value landscape features that could not be replaced (e.g. distinctive wooded copse, historic boundaries). Landscape setting to high value cultural heritage features (archaeological and/or architectural).
Medium	Areas where the landscape character exhibits some capacity and scope for development. Examples of which are landscapes, which have a designation of protection at a county level or at non-designated local level where there is evidence of local value and use.
Low	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas where the landscape exhibits negative character, with no valued elements, features or characteristics. The character of the landscape is such that its capacity for accommodating change is high; where development would make no significant change or would make a positive change. Areas of landscape character that include derelict, mining, industrial land or are part of the urban fringe where there would be a reasonable capacity to embrace change or the capacity to include the development proposals. Management objectives in such areas could be focused on change, creation of landscape improvements and/or restoration to realise a higher landscape value.

12.10 The magnitude of landscape effects is evaluated by considering the degree of change as a consequence of the proposed development. This takes into account whether there is a loss of landscape elements within the application site and the broader study area. Magnitude is classified using the criteria set out in Table 12-2.

Table 12-2: Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Magnitude	Description
Very High	Change that would be large in extent and scale with the loss of critically important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to an extensive change of the landscape in terms of character, value and quality.

High	Change that would be more limited in extent and scale with the loss of important landscape elements and features, that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that contribute to a considerable change of the landscape in terms of character, value and quality.
Medium	Changes that are modest in extent and scale involving the loss of landscape characteristics or elements that may also involve the introduction of new uncharacteristic elements or features that would lead to noticeable changes in landscape character, and quality.
Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements that would lead to discernible changes in landscape character, and quality.
Negligible	Changes affecting small or very restricted areas of landscape character. This may include the limited loss of some elements or the addition of some new features or elements that are characteristic of the existing landscape or are hardly perceivable leading to no material change to landscape character, and quality.

12.11 The significance of landscape effects is determined based on the outcome of the above assessments on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape effects is determined based on the matrix set out in Table 12-3.

Table 12-3: Significance of Landscape Effects

Scale/ Magnitude	Sensitivity of Landscape				
	Very High	***High***	***Medium***	***Low***	***Negligible***
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
High	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

12.12 The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is determined using professional judgement and experience to review and adapt if/as necessary, providing a rationale for the basis of this. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

12.13 Visual impact assessment is concerned with changes that arise in the composition of available views (primarily public views), the response of people to these changes and the overall effects on visual amenity. As with the landscape impact, the visual impact of the proposed development will be assessed as a function of sensitivity versus magnitude. In this instance, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

12.14 The determination of the sensitivity of visual receptors is based on a combination of the value placed on each of the types of visual receptors and the susceptibility to change of each of these. A further factor affecting visual sensitivity is the activity that the viewers are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape.

12.15 The determination of sensitivity of visual receptors is informed by the following:

- **Elevated and / or panoramic views**. This relates to the elevation and extent of the view.
- **Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity**. Remote and tranquil views tend to be static and therefore more sensitive to the introduction of active elements.
- **Degree of perceived naturalness.** Manmade features can appear incongruent in a setting that is considered to be very natural.
- **Presence of striking or noteworthy features.** Features such as a promontory headland, lough or castle can be highly valued, perhaps depicted in paintings and postcards.
- **Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance.** Visitors can attributed significance to such locations for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;
- **Rarity or uniqueness of the view.** Considers how unusual the landscape is on a local, regional and national level.
- **Integrity of the landscape character.** Considers the condition and intactness of the landscape.
- **Sense of place.** Considers whether the location has a perceived meaning to visitors.
- **Sense of awe.** Considers the impact of the view in terms of the sense of timelessness of nature.

12.16 Table 12-5 classifies the sensitivity of visual receptors:

Table 12-4: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	Description
Very High	• Valued views enjoyed within highly sensitive landscape areas – highly sensitive landscape designations are usually defined by a County's Landscape Character Assessment which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan. • Tourist visitors to scenic viewpoint – The scenic value of the view can be defined by County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). • Viewers at very highly aesthetic views and vistas with lack of visual clutter and absence of visual and other disturbance. • Night-time views within dark sky reserves. • Occupiers of residential properties with a high level of visual amenity.
High	• Users of an outdoor recreation feature which focuses on the landscape. • Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened. • Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. • Views from high usage public spaces, direct observers (e.g. views from local residential properties, residential care units with direct views to the development). • Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. • Views to and from local ridges, hills, high-points, buildings of note. • Views to and from sites of regional ecological and / or cultural interest. • Some visual discordance in streetscape. Traffic movements distracting visually but not predominant.
Medium	• Outdoor sports or recreation pass-times which do not offer or focus attention on landscape. • Occupiers of residential properties with a medium level of visual amenity.

	• Non-designated views of distinctive or characteristic landscapes from general road network. • Views to and from open spaces, local parks. • Views from sports and recreational facilities. • Views to and from sites of local ecological and / or cultural interest. • Views from general community, schools, institutional buildings, and associated outdoor areas. • Visual condition of the landscape may be degraded or dominated by traffic.
Low	• Regular commuters. • People at place of work. • Occupiers of residential properties with a low level of visual amenity.
Very Low	• Areas of dereliction and poor visual quality due to such elements as graffiti, vandalism, derelict and run-down buildings and structures and littering. • Views to and from degraded or abandoned urban or peri-urban landscapes or areas of dereliction with very low aesthetics value and little or no elements of interest. • Views to brownfield or damaged landscapes with no associations of note. Views dominated by transportation and other infrastructure of no aesthetics merit.

12.17 The magnitude of visual effects is determined on the basis of two factors; the visual presence of the proposal and its effect on visual amenity. Visual presence relates to how noticeable or visually dominant the proposal is within a particular view. This is determined by a number of factors, including its scale in relation to distance, the complexity of the view, as well as the degree of existing contextual movement experienced. The backdrop against which the development is presented and its relationship with other focal points or prominent features within the view is also considered. The magnitude of visual affects also takes Into account the

duration and reversibility off visual effects. The magnitude of visual impacts is classified in

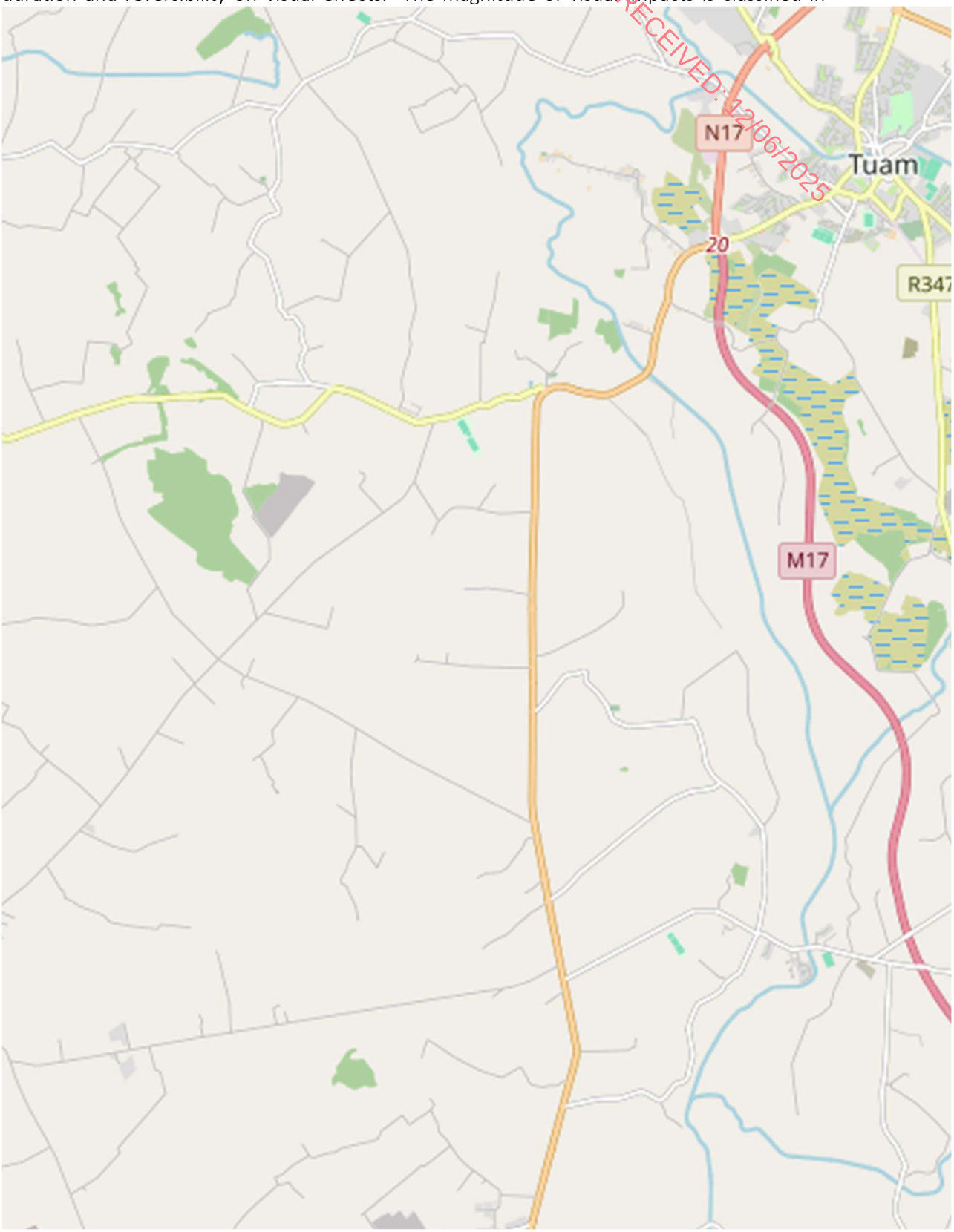

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Table 12-5: Magnitude of Visual Impacts

Magnitude	Description
Very High	The proposal obstructs or intrudes into a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most noticeable element. An extensive degree of visual change will occur within the scene completely altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity
High	The proposal obstructs or intrudes into a significant proportion or important part of the available vista and is one of the most noticeable elements. A considerable degree of visual change will occur within the scene substantially altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity
Medium	The proposal represents a moderate intrusion into the available vista and is a readily noticeable element. A noticeable degree of visual change will occur within the scene perceptibly altering its character, composition and associated visual amenity
Low	The proposal intrudes to a minor extent into the available vista and may not be noticed by a casual observer and/or the proposal would not have a marked effect on the visual amenity of the scene
Negligible	The proposal would be barely discernible within the available vista and/or it would not influence the visual amenity of the scene

12.20 As with landscape impact, the significance of a visual impact is a function of sensitivity and magnitude. The significance of visual impacts is determined based on the matrix set out in Table 12-6.

Table 12-6: Significance of Visual Effects

Scale/ Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	*High*	*Medium*	*Low*	*Negligible*
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
High	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight-imperceptible
Medium	Substantial	Substantial-moderate	Moderate	Slight	Imperceptible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-slight	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible
Negligible	Slight	Slight-imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

12.21 Table 12-6 provides an indicative framework from which the significance of visual effects is determined. Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) recognises that professional judgement is an important part of the LVIA process. Due to nuances within the constituent sensitivity and magnitude judgements, this may be up to one category higher or lower than indicated by the matrix. In all cases, judgements must be clear and transparent method so that the reasoning can be followed and examined by others. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

12.22 In addition to assessing the significance of landscape effects and visual effects, EPA Guidance for EIAs requires that the quality of the effects to be classified as negative/adverse, neutral, or positive/beneficial. This is because visual amenity is perceived by people and therefore subject to variations in the attitude and values of the receptor – one person's attitude to a proposed development may differ from another's. Additionally, in certain situations there may be a policy encouraging a particular development in an area, in which case the policy is effectively prescribing a degree of visual change. If the proposed development achieves the objective of the policy, the resulting effect might be considered positive, even if the landscape character of views are significantly altered. The classification of the quality of the landscape and visual effects seeks to take these variables into account and provide for a rational and robust assessment.

Characteristics Of The Proposed Development

12.23 The proposed development comprises the continued use of the existing limestone quarry and is described in detail in Chapter 3.0 (Project Description), a summary description is provided below.

12.24 The proposed development being applied for under this current planning application is shown on Figure 3.1 and will consist of:

- Continued use of the existing quarry (granted under Planning Ref. File No.: 06/2275 and ABP Ref.: PL07.222783), including drilling, blasting, crushing, processing, and stockpiling of materials within a total site area of 15.09 hectares to the permitted depth of 33m OD.
- Continued use of existing permitted structures and facilities, including:
    - Weighbridge and wheelwash with side and overhead spray bars.
    - Office and staff facilities building and carpark provision (Ref. 17512).
    - Asphalt plant (Ref. 15104), concrete batching plant (Ref. 20419), maintenance shed (Ref. 141295), aggregate shed, ESB substation (Ref. 191964), crushing and screening plant, and stock bays (Ref. 062275 & 21442).
    - Associated site infrastructure.
- Construction of a new quarry storage yard (c. 1.09 Ha.) to the east of the existing quarry.
- Relocation of the existing permitted sheds (Plan Ref File No. 21442) to an area beside the proposed storage yard area.

- Importation of soil and stone (both waste and non-waste) for site restoration purposes and selected construction and demolition waste for recycling to preserve natural aggregate resources, subject to the necessary authorisations.
- The proposed development will facilitate the continued operation and restoration of the site, with the operational life of the quarry ceasing upon resource exhaustion, followed by restoration to agricultural and natural uses using imported material.

12.25 The proposed development is within an overall application area of c. 16.3 hectares and is for a total period of 35 years (comprising an operational period of 33 years followed by 2 years for completion of restoration). The application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Restoration

12.26 It is proposed to return the quarry area to natural habitat after-uses on a phased basis – refer to Figure 3.2 and paragraphs 3.100 – 3.112.

12.27 Where feasible, restoration of exhausted and redundant areas will be carried out at the earliest opportunity.

Nature and Quantity of Material to be Extracted

12.28 The total recoverable reserve of limestone from within the extraction area to the permitted depth of 33m OD is assessed at c. 9 million tonnes.

Duration of Extraction

12.29 An outline of the proposed extraction plan and the final ground level contours is shown in Figure 3.1. Cross-sections through the final landform are shown in Figure 3.3.

Table 3-1
Material Quantities

Material	Quantity
Topsoil / Overburden	10,000 m³ (est.)
Limestone	9 Million Tonnes

12.30 The duration of quarrying activities at the application site will largely be dictated by the rate at which the limestone reserve is extracted from the site. There are many factors which will influence this, including, but not limited to the:

- Prevailing economic climate and related construction industry output;
- Distance of construction projects from the facility (and scale of activity).

12.31 In light of these and other variables, calculation of extraction rates and duration is not an exact science. However, an extraction capacity of up to 300,000 tonnes per annum is sought to provide the applicant with the ability to respond to demand for aggregates for large infrastructure projects in the Region.

12.32 A planning permission duration of 33 years is therefore sought for the extraction and processing period and a further 2 years to complete final restoration of the site.

Phasing Plan

12.33 The proposed extraction plan is outlined below in Figure 3.1. The current floor of the quarry is approximately 60 m OD across most of its area. In the northeastern part of the extraction area, excavation has reached a depth of approximately 33 m OD.

Method of Extraction

12.34 Blasting is undertaken approximately one day per month, potentially increasing to twice per month during periods of high demand.

12.35 Blasting will continue to be undertaken by a third party operator, as currently occurs on site. Drill rigs on the existing quarry floor will continue to be used to drill the charge holes ready for blasting to begin the process of lowering the floor. The rigs are equipped with dust suppression equipment and noise and vibration monitoring will continue to take place as part of the process.

12.36 The recovered rock from the active face will be processed in a similar manner to that already occurring on site, using existing site infrastructure and plant. The blasted rock will be crushed, screened, washed (if required) and conveyed to stockpiles for subsequent loading onto trucks by loading shovels.

12.37 While the existing (semi) static processing plant will remain the primary processing setup, it is anticipated that mobile crushing and screening plant may be deployed within the quarry void from time to time to supplement processing capacity as required.

Operating Hours

12.38 It is proposed to continue operating the quarry in accordance with Condition No. 7 of Planning Ref. 06/2275 and ABP Ref. PL.07.222783.

12.39 The quarry operates under the following permitted hours:

- Monday – Friday: 08:00 – 18:00
- Saturday: 08:00 – 14:00
- Loading permitted Monday – Saturday: 07:00 – 08:00
- No operations on Sundays or Public Holidays

12.40 The asphalt plant, however, operates under a separate permission, with permitted hours as follows (Condition No. 3 of 15104):

- Monday – Friday: 07:00 – 20:00
- Saturday: 07:00 – 14:00
- No operations on Sundays or Public Holidays

12.41 There is no change proposed to the operating hours of the quarry as part of this development, and the asphalt plant will continue to operate within its permitted hours.

Employment

12.42 The proposed development will provide continued employment for up to 30 no. people directly on-site, in addition to a number of indirect employees such as crushing contractors, HGV drivers, maintenance contractors, local suppliers, etc.

12.43 The continued development of the site is consistent with the policies set out in the National Planning Guidelines for the sector; the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Galway County Development plan which recognise the requirement for:

- A secure supply of construction aggregates and related products is necessary for the continued development of the region;

- Proven aggregate reserves need to be safeguarded for future extraction;
- 'Best environmental management practice' to be implemented within quarry developments.

Site Access

12.44 The site is located to the south of the R333 and north of the L2212 from which access is provided via an unnamed local road approximately 600m in length. In the vicinity of the site the L2212 comprises an unmarked single carriage road. The L2212 joins the R333 at a T-junction approximately 1.5km north-east of the site.

12.45 Existing traffic along the L2212 comprises existing quarry traffic in addition to traffic associated with residential dwellings and agricultural uses in the vicinity of the site.

12.46 It is proposed that traffic entering and leaving the site will continue to utilise the existing established site access and haulage routes.

12.47 An existing wheelwash is in place on the site in proximity to the site access.

12.48 The site is estimated to export up to 250,000 tonnes of material annually, consistent with the assessment in Chapter 13: Traffic. The development also projects the importation of approximately 15,000 tonnes of material annually for the phased restoration of the quarry and C&D recycling.

12.49 In determining the daily traffic volumes associated with the development, an average of 38 HGV loads per day (arriving to and departing from the site) has been calculated, based on:

- 50 operational weeks per year
- 5.5 operational days per week (Monday to Saturday)
- Material transported in an average of 27-tonne trucks (with a conservative assessment using 25-tonne loads)
- Facility opening times:
  - Monday – Friday: 08:00 – 18:00
  - Saturday: 08:00 – 14:00

12.50 Additional site traffic includes:

- Staff movements: 30 inbound and 30 outbound trips per day.
- Miscellaneous trips: An estimated 4 trips daily for deliveries, maintenance, and inspections.
- Concrete batching plant: 8 additional HGV trips daily.
- Asphalt plant: 6 additional HGV trips daily.

12.51 Site traffic volumes are expected to remain consistent with current operations, subject to normal market fluctuations. The total daily vehicle movements associated with the quarry operation and related activities are summarized in Table 3-3 of the Traffic Chapter, which estimates 158 daily trips, including 94 HGV movements (59.49% of total site traffic).

Site Security

12.52 The perimeter of the working area is secured in accordance with the relevant Health and Safety legislation and guidelines.

12.53 Existing mature treelines / hedgerows, fencing and screening berms will remain in place and will be supplemented as required to ensure that there will be no accidental entry to the working areas.

12.54 Warning signs are displayed at appropriate intervals along the property boundary.

12.55 The security measures employed will ensure that accidental entry to the site is prohibited. Regular inspections of the site security arrangement will be undertaken by site operatives and repaired immediately if any damage is noted.

12.56 All personnel will be appropriately trained and certified in the safe quarrying, handling, transportation and processing of aggregate materials. All personnel will be thoroughly trained on the properties of all materials and products being handled within the quarry and will be trained to react in the unlikely event of an unplanned incident.

Site Roads, Parking and Hardstanding Areas

12.57 HGV's access the site from the existing entrance directly off the L2212.

12.58 Adequate car parking provision for employees and visitors is provided at the existing weighbridge office as indicated in Figure 3.1.

Weighbridge

12.59 All HGV traffic is directed across the existing weighbridge, the location of which are also indicated on the site infrastructure layout in Figure 3.1.

Wheelwash

12.60 There is an existing wheel wash system (with side and overhead spray bars) in place at the site at the location shown on Figure 3.1.

Utilities & Welfare Facilities

12.61 Potable water for the onsite welfare facilities is provided by an existing onsite well.

12.62 Water required for the wheelwash and dust suppression will continue to be provided from the existing quarry water management system.

12.63 Water required for the processing plant will continue to be provided from the water management system.

12.64 All of the aforementioned infrastructure will remain in place to facilitate the proposed development.

12.65 Sufficient lighting will continue to be provided within the development area to operate machinery to ensure safe operations during winter periods. External lighting will continue to be fitted with suitable baffles to minimise light spillage from the site.

12.66 Electricity will continue to be provided by way of the existing electricity substation and on-site generator.

12.67 The proposed development does not include any additional wastewater treatment systems as existing systems in place will continue to be utilised.

12.68 There will be no requirement for additional utilities.

Offices and Ancillary Facilities

12.69 Ancillary facilities at the site include office, weighbridge, canteen, toilets, wheelwash (with side and overhead spray bars), maintenance shed, aggregate (product) shed(s), ESB substation.

Water Management

12.70 It is proposed to maintain the same approach to drainage as approved under Plan File Ref. No.06/2275 and ABP Ref. No. PL07.222783. The quarry will continue to be worked above the water table – refer to EIAR Chapter 8: Water.

12.71 Surface water will continue to be contained within the site area and prevented from flowing off site by berms that have been constructed around the perimeter of the site. This water flows by gravity to a sump located within the quarry floor.

12.72 Class 1 fuel class interceptors are in place where the potential exists for hydrocarbon pollution, eg, at refuelling points.

Fuel Storage

12.73 No new fuel or oil storage systems are proposed.

12.74 Refuelling of vehicles will continue to take place on a hardstand concrete base with associated hydrocarbon interceptor.

12.75 Waste oils are appropriately stored before being removed from site by a licenced contractor.

12.76 Contamination by oil or chemicals on site are mitigated by ensuring that storage is outside the operational area and liquid storage is over an impervious concrete surface.

12.77 Staff responsible for fuel storage are trained in proper fuel handling and spillage response procedures.

Processing methods

12.78 Proposed processing methods will consist of crushing, screening and washing of the excavated material. This will continue to be undertaken using the existing processing plant(s) within the application site.

12.79 From time to time, mobile crushing and screening plant may be deployed within the quarry void to supplement processing capacity as required. This ensures operational flexibility while maintaining compliance with site management practices and environmental controls.

12.80 Once material has been processed it is graded and stored in stockpiles on the quarry floor prior to sale.

12.81 Washing of material is proposed as part of the development and will be undertaken using a closed-circuit system, which will recirculate wash water via a settlement lagoon and sump located within the quarry floor. This system will significantly reduce the need for ongoing abstraction or topping-up, ensuring efficient water management and minimising environmental impact.

Lighting

12.82 Sufficient lighting is provided at the site to ensure safe operations during winter periods.

Waste management

Extractive Waste Management

12.83 Almost all products and by-products arising from the aggregate processing have commercial value. Any waste materials from the site are stored, collected, recycled and/or disposed of in accordance with any requirements of Galway County Council.

General Waste Management

12.84 Potential waste produced and the measures used to control it are described as follows:

- Scrap metal – these materials are chiefly produced from the maintenance of the possessing plants and can cause a nuisance if allowed to build up in an uncontrolled manner. A designated scrap metal area will be demarcated on site and the build-up of scrap is controlled by the regular removal by licensed scrap metal dealers.
- Used Oil and Oil Filters – any waste oil/oil filters that may arise from servicing of fixed or mobile plant will be removed from the site by a licensed waste contractor.
- Used Batteries – similarly all used batteries will be removed from site for collection and recycling by a licensed waste contractor in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations.
- Domestic Style Waste (Canteen Waste) – domestic waste generated at the offices and employee's facility will be collected by a licensed waste collection contractor.

Baseline Conditions

Study Area

12.85 The Study Area on which the LVIA focuses is set out in Figure 12.1, extending to include all areas within which potential landscape and visual effects are considered most likely to occur. The boundary which defines the Study Area was selected on a realistic and pragmatic basis, based on a desk top study, which included an examination of aerial photography and ordnance survey mapping, as well as Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping. ZTV mapping is based on contour mapping and therefore does not take into account land cover such as vegetation, buildings and boundary treatments. As a consequence, a series of site visits was undertaken during both summer and winter months to establish the potential visibility of the site from the surrounding landscape.

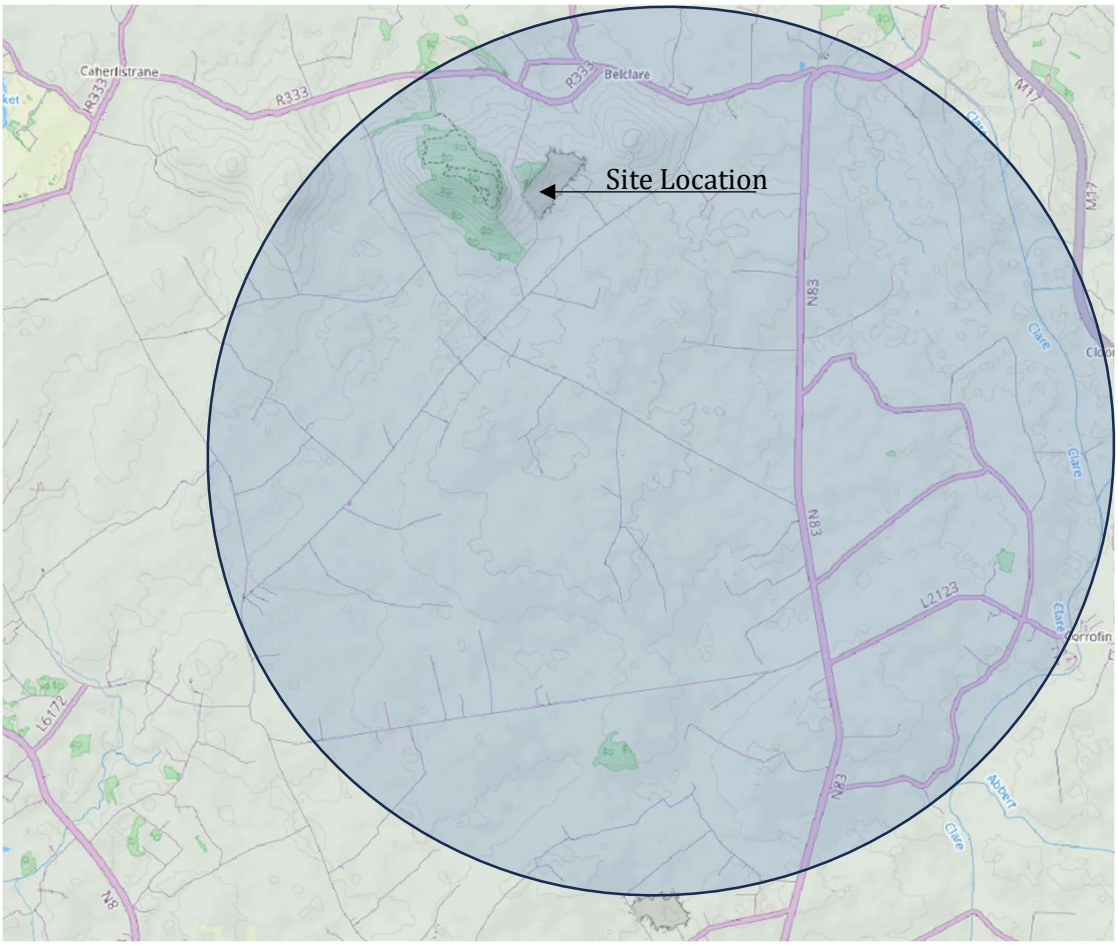


Figure 12-1: Study Area

Landscape Baseline

12.86 The landscape baseline represents the existing landscape context and is the scenario against which any changes to the landscape context brought about by the proposed development will be assessed in terms of direct physical impacts on landform and land cover and also impacts on prevailing landscape character.

12.87 A description of the landscape context of the site and surrounding area is provided below covering landscape and planning policy, landform and drainage, vegetation and land use,

settlement patterns, transport routes and public amenities and facilities. Many of the landscape elements identified also relate to visual receptors i.e. places and transport routes from which viewers can potentially see the proposed development. Of relevance to this assessment is the inclement weather (which is commonplace in this region) which can affect visibility.

County Galway Landscape Character Assessment

12.88 A landscape appraisal of County Galway is set out in Appendix 4 (Landscape Character Assessment) – of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. The Landscape Character Appraisal describes the county in terms of the landscape character types present and divides the county into Landscape Regions and Landscape Units with the visual sensitivity of these units set out. The Landscape Character Assessment also identifies a number of protected views and scenic routes within the County.

12.89 The proposed development site is located in *The Eastern Plans*, which is described as:

> *…..underlain by younger softer rocks. This derives most of its character from the covering blanket of glacial soils that give rise to extensive, level plains of grasslands, with many areas of bog in the north.*

12.90 The proposed development is located within the *Central Galway Complex* Landscape Character Type (Type 6) and immediately adjoining the North Galway Complex Landscape (5).

> *An extensive plain of grasslands comprising of medium-to-large fields with low enclosures and many areas of low stone walls used for field boundaries. It also includes distinctive features, including locally elevated features, such as Knockmaa, south -west of Tuam as well as areas that overlook Lough Corrib in the west and the complex of lakes and foothills between Gort and Loughrea in the south. This area contains the majority of the county's population with associated high levels of urban generated rural housing, roads and settlements. These range from large to small settlements with associated infrastructure, services and commercial activity. The western and southern parts of these landscapes are underlain by karst limestone which results in many unusual hydrological features - such as turloughs and large springs. The more productive soils of this area have resulted in long histories of more intensive historic settlement and associated higher concentrations of remains from major periods of land - management, including early Christian, medieval and 16th - 19th century estates. This historic pattern of settlement has resulted in elevated concentration of archaeological, architectural and cultural remains. Features from different periods of land management and settlement are often found in close proximity. Examples of sites with many periods include Pallas, Eyrecourt and Garbally Park.*

12.91 Sensitivities within this area are identified as *"open countryside offers frequent extensive panoramic views from local high points"*. Knockmaa is a notable feature within the North Galway Complex as it is one of few elevated features in the area.

12.92 Landscape Character Type 6 is subdivided into 5 Landscape Character Units, the application is located within *Unit 6a Black River Basin*, which is described as follows:

> *Undulating long-occupied working landscape with high levels of settlement. Large regular fields and numerous parkland remnants. Low enclosure except for localised areas of mature parkland trees.*

12.93 The site adjoins 5e Northern River Clare Basin, which is described as:

> *Extensive, largely level plain with low enclosure. A long settled working landscape of large regular stone-walled fields. Extensive areas of bog in east. Transition zone from bog areas to east.*

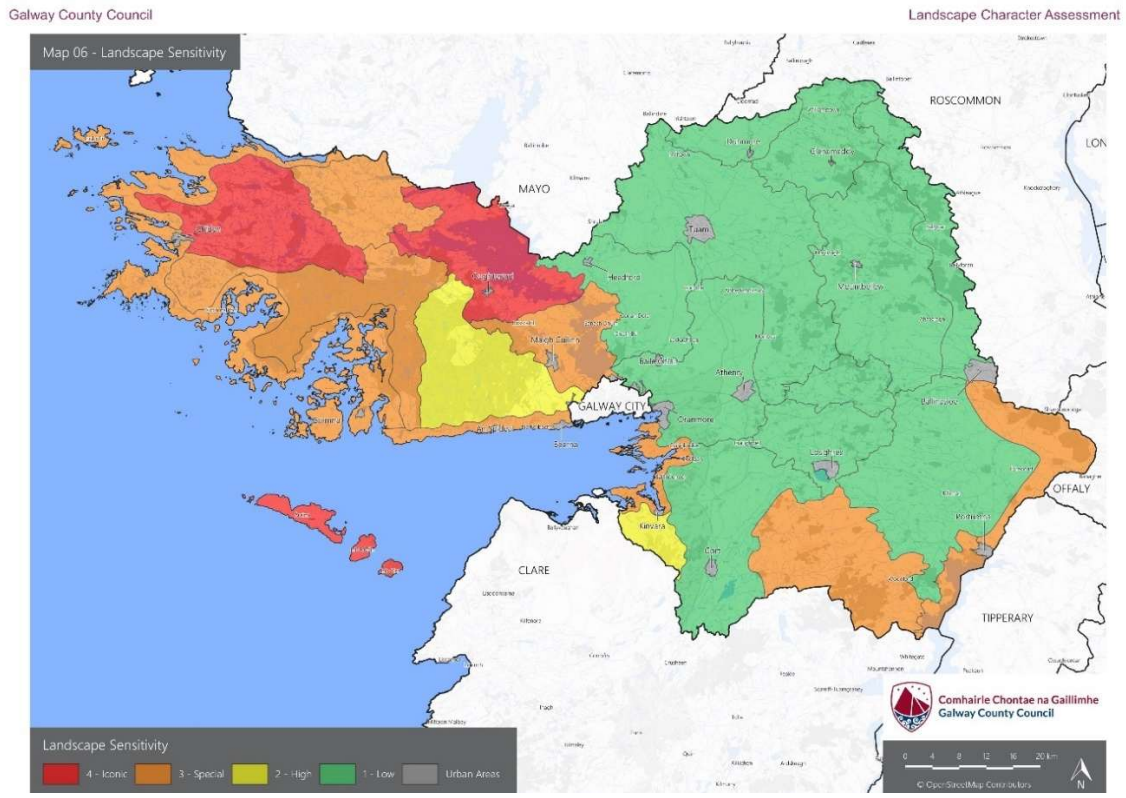
12.94 The Landscape Character Assessment provides a sensitivity assessment of the County taking into account factors such as "*elevation, slope, land-cover and soil*", the sensitivity of the county ranges from Class 1 "low" to Class 2 "high", Class 3 "special" and Class 4 "iconic". The application site and Central Galway Complex Type has been assigned a sensitivity rating of "low", which is "*unlikely to be adversely affected by change*". Section 4.6 of the Landscape Character Assessment however notes:

> *It should be noted that individual projects in any landscape area, notwithstanding its dominant sensitivity rating, may have greater or lesser impacts on the visual quality and character of the landscape depending on the details of the project design and the specific characteristics of the site and its context. Therefore, this section should be read in conjunction with the policies, objectives and development management standards of the Galway County Development Plan (2022 - 2028). The planning authority will consider this sensitivity rating and may, depending on the nature of the site and development require the applicants to demonstrate that the proposed development addresses the sensitivities identified for each relevant landscape type. In this respect, applicants may be required to prepare Visual Impact Assessment, photomontages etc. to the satisfaction of the Council prior to the making of any decision in respect to a planning application.*

12.95 52 *Protected Views* are set out in Section 6 of the Landscape Character Assessment and are identified on map 08. There are no protected views in the immediate vicinity of the site and the site is not visible from any protected views.

12.96 8 *Scenic Routes* are set out in Section 7 of the Landscape Character Assessment. There are no scenic routes in the immediate vicinity of the site and the site is not visible from any scenic routes.

Figure 12-2: Map 06 Landscape Sensitivity



12.97 The following policies of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 are of relevance to the application:

> LCM 1: Preservation of Landscape Character
>
> Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
>
> LCM 2: Landscape Sensitivity Classification
>
> The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.
>
> LCM 3: Landscape Sensitivity Ratings
>
> Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.
>
> LCM 5: Prospecting and Mining
>
> *It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to give careful consideration in exceptional circumstances for prospecting or mining for gold, silver or base metals in landscapes class 3 or 4.*

Landform and Drainage

12.98 The site is situated between the 60m and 90m contour lines, within an area that is gently undulating with few highpoints over 50m above OD (Ordnance Datum), the notable exception being Knockmaa (167m above OD) and Knockacarrigeen (110m above OD), which are located immediately to the west and east of the site respectively. The existing quarry void has faces rising up to a height of 30m.

12.99 Due to the karst nature of the underlying geology, surface water features are generally absent from the study area. The site is located in the Corrib WFD Catchment (30) and the Clare (Galway) SC060 WFD Sub Catchment. The Clare River which is situated 3km to the east, rises north of Ballyhaunis in Co. Mayo from where it flows south to Claregalway where it turns westwards and enters Lough Corrib at Muchrush.

12.100 The site is situated within the "Cong-Robe" Groundwater Body (GWB) (IE_WE_G_0019). The groundwater flow paths are understood to be generally "*towards the River Clare and L. Corrib, but the highly karstified nature of the bedrock means that locally groundwater flow directions can be highly variable*."

12.101 3 no. turloughs have been recorded within approximately 3km of the application site. Belclare Turlough is located approximately 1.5km north of the site, Killower Turlough is located approximately 2.5 km north of the site and Turlough O'Gall is located approximately 2.5km north-west of the site. Each of the three turloughs is a proposed National Heritage Area (pNHA).

A further turlough (Turlough Monaghan) is located approximately 3.6km south-west of the site and is also a pNHA.

Vegetation and Landuse

12.102 The application site comprises an existing limestone quarry with a corresponding history of extraction dating back to pre-1963. The site itself presently comprises a broadly L-shaped site with an extraction area of 15.09 ha and a total site area of approximately 16.3 ha. The site is defined by a mix quarry related uses, including the primary excavation area, processing area, concrete batching plant and asphalt plant. The site is bounded to the north-east by a neighbouring quarry operated by McTigue Quarries Ltd. The boundaries of the existing quarry are marked by a mix of screening berms and hedgerows with secure fencing in situ.

12.103 The surrounding landscape is rural in character, consisting of small-medium sized fields under permanent pasture with boundaries defined by dry stone walls, hedgerows or a mix of both. Some internal hedgerows appear to have been replaced by post and wire fencing. Roadside hedgerows to the south and east of the site are largely devoid of planting, while to the north, hedgerows are often mature and dense. Agricultural use primarily comprises pasture with few examples of other farming types observed.

12.104 There are areas of woodland in the vicinity of the application site, most notably Horseshoe Wood at Knockmaa, which is situated immediately to the west of the site and Castlefeecul Wood, which adjoins the northern boundary of the site. There is a large area of cutaway bog located to the north of the site at Belclare.

Centres of Population and Houses

12.105 Residences within the general area typically consist of one-off rural houses and ribbon development along the local road network. There are no properties within 400m of the extraction area, the nearest properties comprise a detached farm house approximately 590m to the north of the site and a series of dwellings on the L2212 south-west of the site. There are approximately 56 dwellings within 1km of the quarry. The closest settlement to the site is the village of Belclare, which is situated approximately 1.2km north of the site.

12.106 The closest settlement to the site is the village of Belclare, which is situated approximately 1.2km north of the site. Further afield, Tuam is situated approximately 5.6km north-east, while Headford is situated 20km south and Galway City is approximately 22km south of the site.

Transport routes

12.107 The site is located to the south of the R333 and north of the L2112 from which access is provided via an unnamed local road approximately 600m in length.

12.108 In the vicinity of the site the L2112 comprises an unmarked single carriage road with a 60km/hr speed limit. The L2112 joins the R333 at a T-junction approximately 1.5km north-east of the site.

12.109 Existing traffic along the L2112 comprises existing quarry traffic in addition to traffic associated with residential dwellings, agricultural uses, and people travelling to access services in Belclare.

12.110 The N83 Galway – Sligo National route is situated 2.5km east of the site, while the M17 is situated 5.5km to the east. Both features represent prominent linear features within the landscape. An unnamed local road defines the south-western boundary of the site and offers a route between the L2112 and the R333, passing along the eastern edge of Knockmaa.

Utilities

12.111 The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line runes in a broadly east-west direction immediately to the south of the application site, crossing the local access road. Other notable electricity infrastructure in the wider landscape includes the Cashla – Dalton 110kV line, approximately 4.4km west of the site and the Cashla – Cloon 110KV line, approximately 2.8 km east of the site.

Public Amenities and Facilities

12.112 Counties Galway has extensive networks of trails which provide a recreational resource for both visitors and locals. Much of the hiking trails are focused on the west the county, including The Western Way and Connemara National Park, however the following trail and loop walk is noted in the vicinity of the site.

- Knockmaa Nature Reserve.
- Tuam Park.

12.113 The Failte Ireland *Visitors to Attractions Dashboard* provides an overview of visitor numbers to various attractions throughout the country. The nearest attraction included in the survey to the site is the Atlantaquaria – Ireland's National Aquarium in Galway City.

12.114 Other recreational and community facilities and amenities are available in the towns of Tuam (6km west of the site) and Headford (10km west of the site). These include GAA clubs (Tuam Stars GAA, Caherlistrane GAA Club), shops, health centre, community hall and churches.

Nature Conservation Designations

12.115 The site is not located within any designated European sites, however the following designated sites are located are noted:

- Lough Corrib SAC – 3.85km
- Lough Corrib SPA – 8.85km
- Shrule Turlough SAC– 11.215km
- Cloughmoyne SAC – 13.68km
- Morocha Lough SAC – 14.96km

12.116 There are six NHA's/pNHA's within approximately 5km of the site:

- Knockmaa Hill pNHA – 0.17km
- Belclare Turlough pNHA – 1.24km
- Kilower Turlough pNHA – 2.45km
- Turlough O'Gall pNHA – 2.19km
- Lough Hacket pNHA – 5.5km
- Turlough Monaghan pNHA – 3.56km

Archaeological Sites

12.117 An examination of the Record of Monuments and Places for County Galway indicated that there are no Recorded Monuments located within the application site. However the area surrounding the site and in particular, Knockmaa include several records:

- GA043-129002- : Castle - unclassified : TOBERMINA
- GA043-129001 : Ringfort - cashel : TOBERMINA
- GA042-064002 : Cairn - unclassified : CALTRAGH
- GA042-064005 : Cross : CALTRAGH
- GA042-064: Cairn – unclassified
- GA042-064001 : Designed landscape – folly
- GA042-064004 : Cairn – unclassified
- GA042-221 : Designed landscape - summer house
- GA042-063 : Designed landscape – folly
- GA042-225 : Designed landscape - summer house
- GA043-130 : Designed landscape - tree-ring
- GA043-024 : Children's burial ground
- GA043-111 : House - indeterminate date
- GA043-033006 : Hillfort
- GA043-033002 : Ringfort – cashel
- GA043-033001 : Cairn – unclassified
- GA043-033005 : Cairn – unclassified
- GA043-107: Ringfort - rath
- GA043-106: Ringfort – rath
- GA043-112: Field system
- GA043-105001 : Ringfort – rath
- GA043-105002- : Ringfort – rath
- GA043-104: Ringfort – rath
- GA043-110: Quarry
- GA043-103: Ringfort – rath
- GA043-138: Ringfort – cashel
- GA043-017: Country house
- GA043-087: Ringfort – cashel
- GA042-076002- : House - indeterminate date
- GA042-076003- : Well
- GA042-076001- : Enclosure
- GA042-076006- : House - indeterminate date
- GA042-076007- : House - indeterminate date
- GA042-076005- : House - indeterminate date

12.118 An archaeological assessment was undertaken in 2006 which included a desktop study and a field inspection. The study found no evidence of any surviving sites, monuments or artefacts within the application site.

12.119 According to the Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 there are no protected structures on the application site. The nearest protected structure is the Sacred Heart Church, Belclare, situated approximately 1.2km from the application site.

Dark Skies

12.120 There are two dark sky locations in Ireland; the Kerry International Dark Sky Reserve on the Iveragh Peninsula and the Mayo Dark Sky Park, encompassing the Wild Nephin National Park. The latter is the closest designation to the site, located approximately70km to the north-west.

12.121 Sources of light pollution in the vicinity of the site comprise the towns of Tuam and Headford.

Identification of Viewpoints

12.122 The visual baseline identifies locations where people engaged in particular activities or resident in particular settings will be afforded potential views of the proposed development and which may impact on their visual amenity. Only those parts of the receiving environment that potentially afford views of the proposed development are of concern to this section of the assessment, this is known as the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI).

12.123 An initial site visit was undertaken to refine the list of viewpoints based on the ZVI and ZTV and informed by previous work that had been undertaken at the site, including the 2019 EIAR. The initial site visit was undertaken on 18th April 2024, conditions during the site visit were dry, but overcast. Subsequent site visit were undertaken on 28th July 2024, 30th December 2024 and 20th May 2025, from which images were selected to illustrate the potential visual effect of the development.

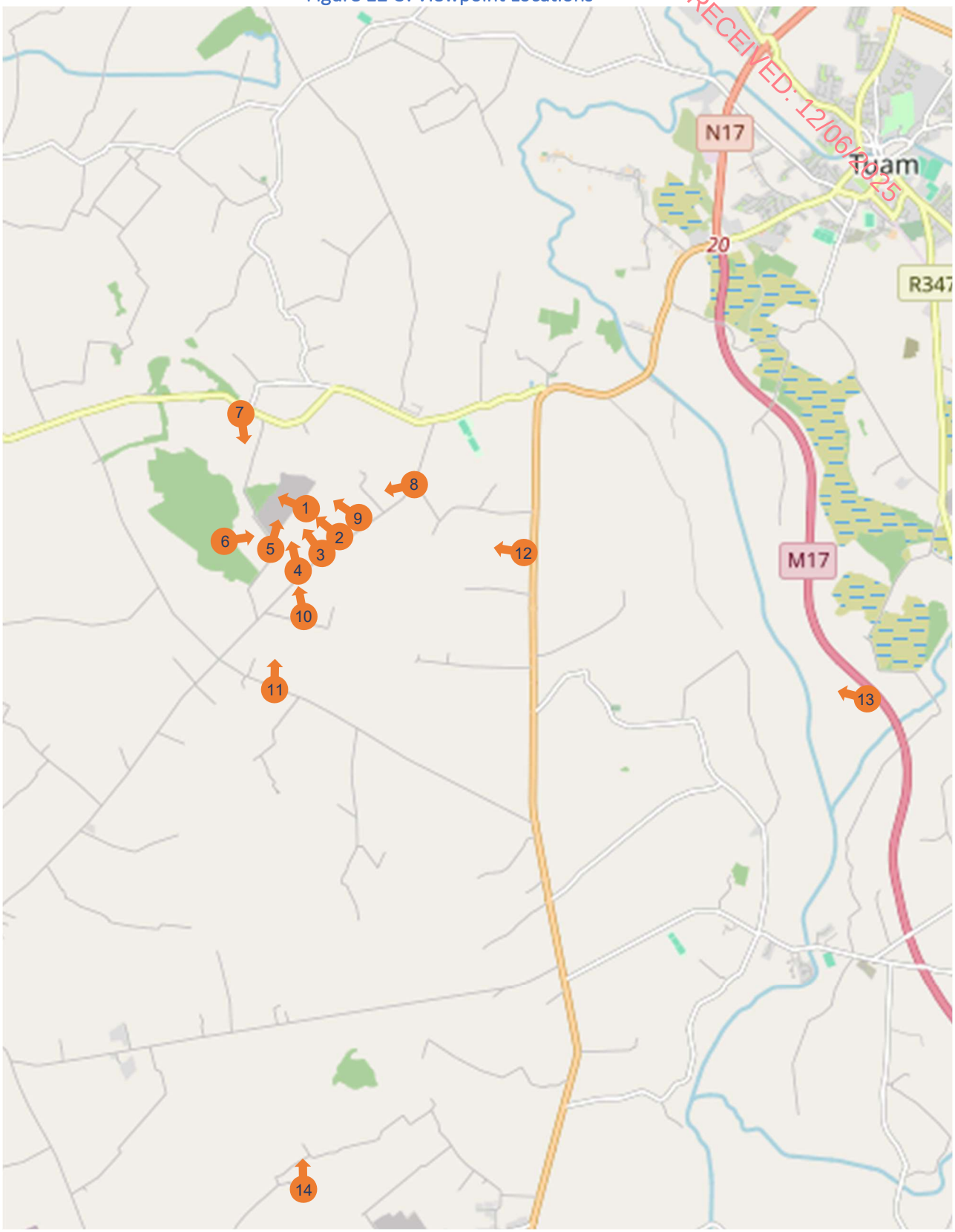
12.124 A series of representative viewpoints were selected to illustrate typical views towards the existing and proposed development. Viewpoints were selected to reflect the range of view types available of the application site, including close-up and distant views, views from amenity and heritage resources, views consistent with those of residents and views from transport routes. The majority of viewpoints selected occur within a 1km radius of the site,. Figure 12-3 illustrates the location of the selected viewpoints.

12.125 In accordance with Landscape Institute and IEMA 2013, the viewpoints selected are from publicly accessible areas. It is acknowledged that there is potential further visibility of the application site from agricultural land and private residential gardens in the immediate vicinity of the site, however as these are not publicly accessible, viewpoints close to those locations were selected wherever possible.

Table 12-7: Description of Viewpoint Locations.

VRP No.	Location	Direction of view
VP1	Access road to site, south-east of site	North & west
VP2	Junction of access road and L2112, south-east of site	North & west
VP3	L2112 south of site	North
VP4	L2112, south of site	North
VP5	Unnamed road, west of site	North-east
VP6	Knockmaa	East
VP7	R333 at entrance to Castle Hacket House	South
VP8	L2112 east of site	West
VP9	Local Road at Ballydotia West	North
VP10	L2111 at Carheens	North
VP11	N83 east of site	West
VP12	M17 Motorway	North-west
VP13	L2122 at Bunnahevna More	North

Figure 12-3: Viewpoint Locations



Assessment of Potential Effects

Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects

Sensitivity of Landscape to Change

Landscape Elements

12.126 The site comprises an existing limestone quarry that has been present in part in this location for nearly 20 years. As a consequence the landscape elements present on the site reflect that use and comprise extraction areas, processing areas and material storage areas. The site also includes a number of existing screening berms and hedgerows, which were installed with the objective of providing visual and acoustic screening for the existing site.

12.127 The landscape elements do not make a significant contribution to the overall aesthetic of this part of County Galway, rather their primary value is associated with their function i.e. screening of extraction works.

Landscape Character

12.128 The site is contained within an attractive landscape setting, but not necessarily a vulnerable one. The County Galway Landscape Character Assessment of the CDP highlights that this is an area is a "*busy working* landscape". There are features within this landscape that are typical of this description, including visually discordant features, such as powerlines and major road infrastructure.

12.129 The County Galway Landscape Character Assessment also recognises that the area has the capacity to absorb development as it has been assigned a "low" landscape sensitivity due in part the prevailing landcover and topography, with very few high points over 100m AOD in the surrounding area.

12.130 Large proportions of County Galway, particularly to the west have been assigned a higher landscape sensitivity, including Lough Corrib to the west of the site, which has been assigned a Landscape Sensitivity of "Special". These more sensitive areas are more vulnerable to change and cannot comfortably accommodate this type of development without more significant landscape effects. Also in contrast to these more sensitive locations, the area does not offer a significant resource for recreational visitors or tourists. An exception is Knockmaa, located to the west of the site, which is a recreational and cultural resource within this area.

12.131 On balance of theses factors outlined above, the sensitivity of the site including the individual elements and the overall landscape character is deemed to be low.

Low	Areas where the landscape character exhibits a higher capacity for change from development. Typically, this would include lower value, non-designated landscapes that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Landscape Elements

12.132 The proposed development will not substantially alter the landscape elements that are present on the site. Notably, all existing screening berms and hedgerows will be retained and reinforced where necessary.

12.133 The limestone will continue be extracted from the site on a phased basis and as a consequence the excavation area will be altered gradually over time, with the entire quarry being excavated over the 33 year period proposed.

12.134 In addition to the physical disturbance of the landform and land cover, the proposed development would result effectively result in the delay in the restoration of the site, which is proposed to comprise the establishment of a low-maintenance, native-species grassland.

Landscape Character

12.135 The proposed development would not result in the introduction of new elements into the landscape, nor would it alter the perception of the character of the landscape in this areas as a predominately agricultural and wooded landscape.

12.136 Quarry related activities, such as the movement of heavy vehicles within, as well as to and from the Quarry are already commonplace in the immediate context of the Site, however the main visible effect of the proposed development on landscape character would be as a consequence of the continuation of this activity, including vehicles entering and exiting the site for an additional 33 years. The effect of this will be very localised – within the site boundaries and on the L2112.

12.137 In terms of duration, the operational stage, landscape effects will be long term in accordance with EPA definitions.

12.138 On balance of the factors outlined above, the magnitude of landscape impact during the operational phase is deemed to be **Low** relative to the existing baseline which is of an established working quarry within this existing landscape.

Low	Changes affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, together with the loss of some less characteristic landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements that would lead to discernible changes in landscape character, and quality.

12.139 With reference to the significance matrix (Table 12-3) above, the **low** landscape sensitivity judgement attributed to the landscape coupled with a **low** magnitude of landscape impact, it is considered to result in an **slight-imperceptible** significance of landscape impact.

12.140 Table 12-8 provides a summary description of the likely landscape effects based on table 3.4 of EPA(2022).

Table 12-8: Assessment Summary based on EPA 2022

Description of Effect	Evaluation	Comment
Quality	Negative	Whilst an evaluation of "negative" has been assigned to the assessment, it should be noted that as the site is not a greenfield site, but rather has operated as a limestone quarry since 2008 and therefore the baseline is of a landscape with an operational quarry. The Galway Landscape Character Assessment recognises this as being a working landscape.
Extent	Local	The effect on landscape elements and character is restricted to within the site boundary as although the site itself is visible from areas beyond the boundary, the changes proposed would not be easily discernible from those viewpoints relative to the baseline.

Probability	Likely	The effects described above can reasonably be expected to occur.
Duration	Long-term	The projected life of the quarry is 33 years.
Frequency	Daily	The quarry will operate Monday – Saturday.
Significance	Slight - Imperceptible	The site will continue to appear as a limestone quarry. All existing screening berms and hedgerows will be retained. Activity at the access will continue. These changes will be noticeable though without significant consequences.

Assessment of Potential Visual Effects

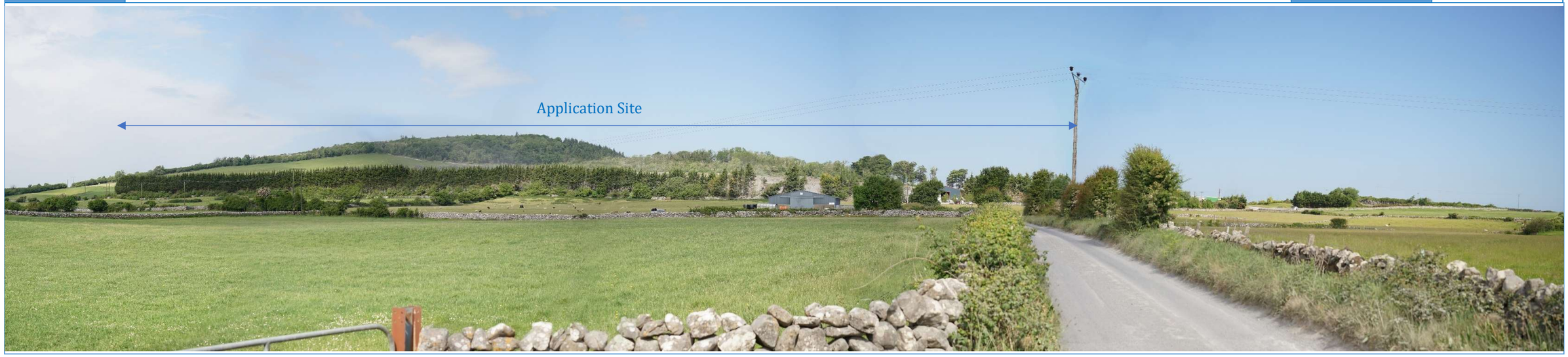
12.141 Table 12-9 below provides a detailed assessment of the visual effect of the proposed development, including clarification on the sensitivity and magnitude ratings and correspondingly the significance of the effects for each of the viewpoints selected and identified in Figure 12-3 above.

12.142 The extent to which the development is likely to result in a negative visual intrusion is determined by a number of factors:

- The extent of the proposed development, what is the site size.
- The contrast in colour between the faces of the sand and gravel pit in comparison to the surrounding land uses.
- The scale of buildings or plant that may appear incongruous due to their scale or colour.
- The level of activity at the site, is there night time activity and associated lighting.

Table 12-9: Description of Viewpoint Locations.

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Effect Description	Evaluation
VP1 Access road to site, south-east of site	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. Knockmaa is visible in the background as a tree-covered hill, with Castlefeecul Wood visible immediately to the rear of the application site. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted crossing the local road and running across land adjoining the site. The site itself is visible as a strong linear hedgerow formed of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, with some storage shed visible through gaps in the roadside trees. These sheds do not appear incongruous in this rural setting where agricultural sheds are frequently observed (note existing sheds in middle ground, outside of application site).	**Medium –** Local road used by quarry visitors, agricultural traffic and visitors to business. However the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is largely screened from the road by the existing hedgerow which is in situ along the south-eastern boundary of the site. There are glimpses of some of the quarry face and overburden storage areas between gaps in the hedgerow to the rear of the agricultural shed in the middle ground. These gaps occurred following storms during winter 2024/25. The lost trees are being replaced with semi-mature trees. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by a combination of the roadside vegetation and the existing boundary planting at the application site. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the road by quarry vehicles.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	No



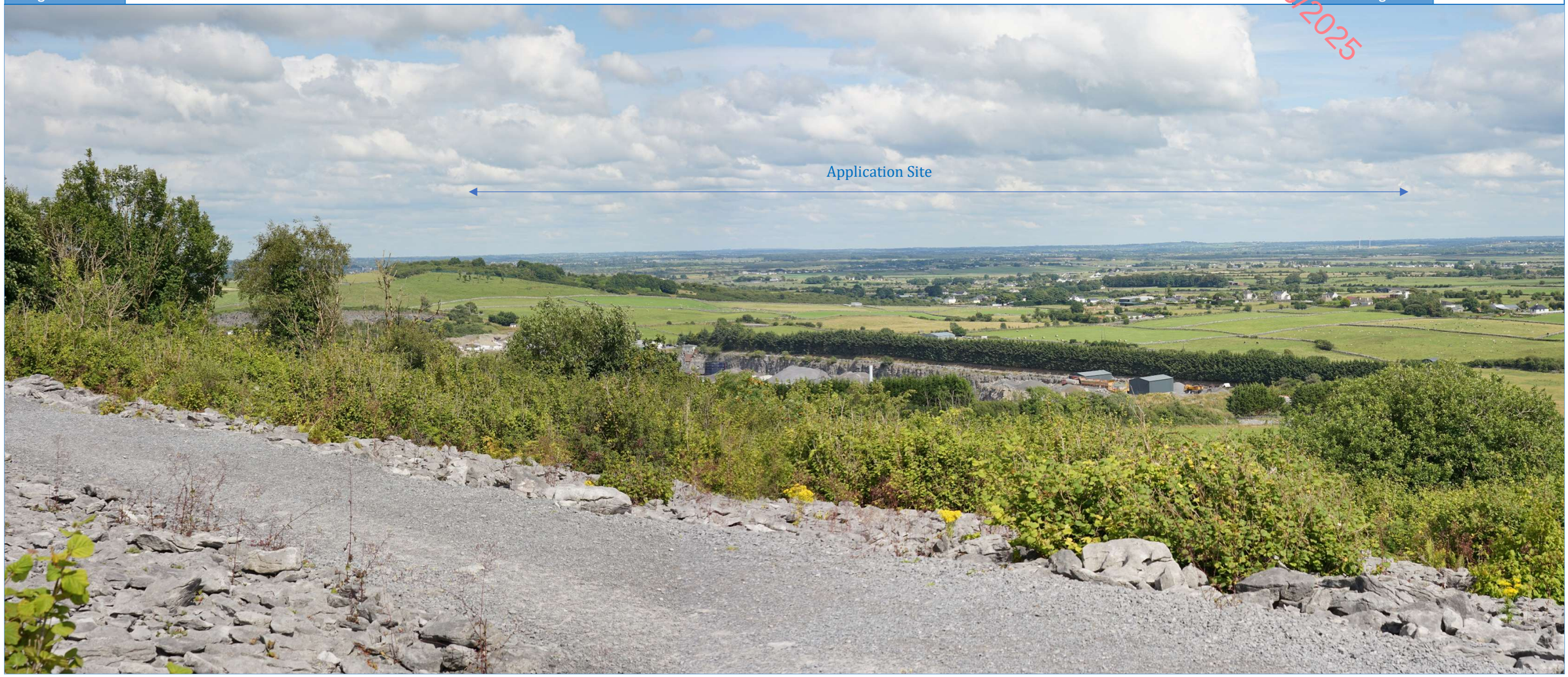
VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP2 Junction of access road and L2112, south-east of site.	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls, that are visible in the background. The foreground is dominated by boundary walls serving residential dwellings and associated ornamental hedging. The boundary vegetation associated with the site is visible in the background. Visual detractions include the existing telegraph pole.	**Low –** Local road used by quarry visitors, agricultural traffic and visitors to business.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is not visible as is screened by the existing roadside vegetation and the hedgerow which is in situ along the south-eastern boundary of the site. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by a combination of the roadside vegetation and the existing boundary planting at the application site. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the road by quarry vehicles.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **low** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP3 L2112 south of site	The view is from the L2112 depicting an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. Knockmaa is visible in the background as a tree-covered hill, with Castlefeecul Wood visible immediately to the rear of the application site. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted running across land adjoining the site. The site itself is visible as a strong linear hedgerow formed of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, with glimpses of the existing north-western face of the quarry above the hedgerow as well as some of the overburden storage areas.	**Medium –** L2112 used by quarry traffic, agricultural traffic and residents. However the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is largely screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application, however some glimpses of the quarry are visible above the hedgerow. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting at the application site. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	Not required

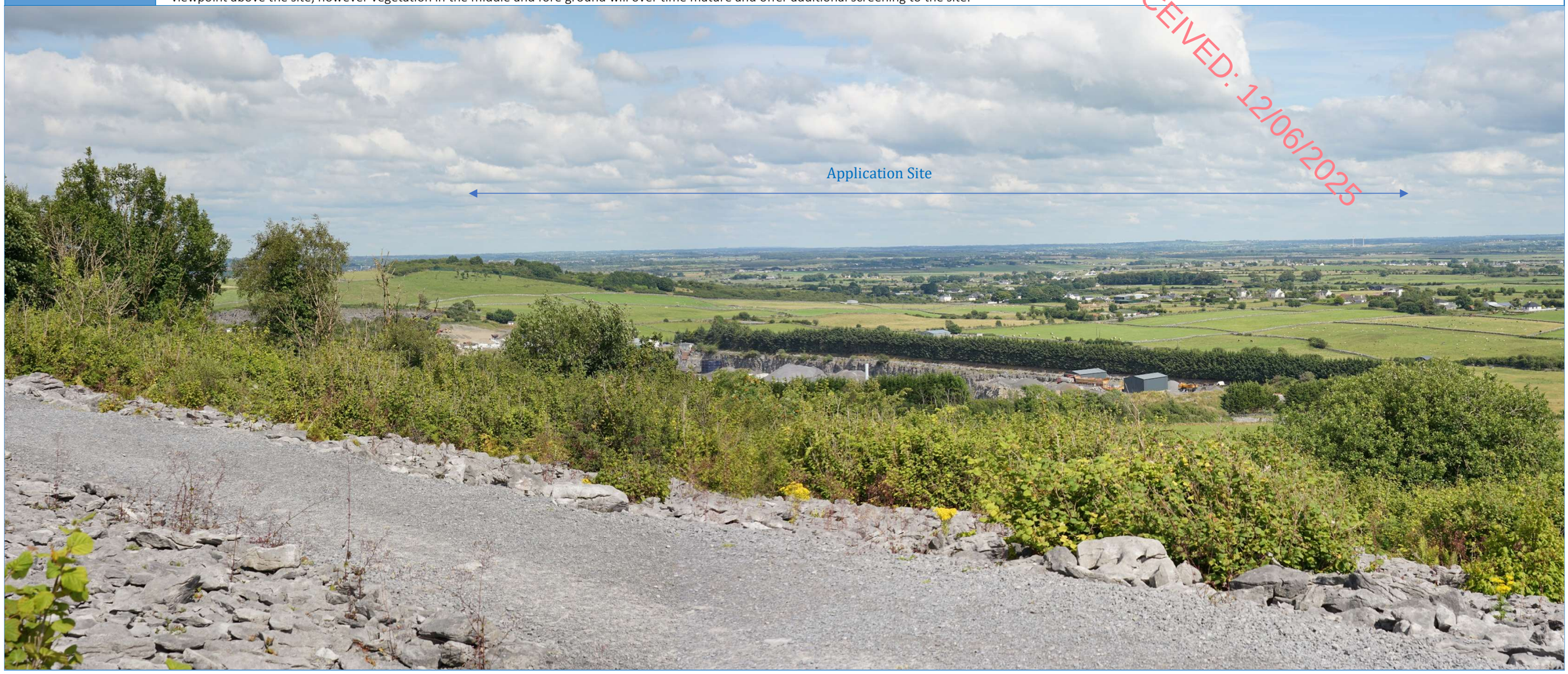
VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP4 L2112 south of site	The view is from the L2112 depicting an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls, south-west of VP3. Knockmaa is visible in the background as a tree-covered hill, with Castlefeecul Wood visible immediately to the rear of the application site. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted running across land adjoining the site. The site itself is visible as a strong linear hedgerow formed of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, with glimpses of the existing north-western face of the quarry above the hedgerow as well as some of the overburden storage areas. The existing sheds on the site are also present in the right of the image.	**Medium –** L2112 road used by quarry traffic, agricultural traffic and residents. However the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is largely screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application, however some glimpses of the quarry are visible above the hedgerow. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting at the application site. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	Not required

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP5 Unnamed road, west of site	The view is from an unnamed local road running south-west of the site. The view depicts an agricultural landscape enclosed by post and wire fencing and hedgerows. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted crossing land adjoining the site. The site itself is visible as a strong linear hedgerow formed of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, marking the south-western and south-eastern site boundaries. Quarry warning signs were noted along the roadside, no other quarry features were noted.	**Medium –** Local road used by agricultural traffic, commuters & residents. This view does not include Knockmaa, however Knockmaa is a prominent feature when travelling along this local road.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting and by the topography at this viewpoint. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP6 Knockmaa	The view forms part of a 270° panoramic view. This view depicts the Knockmaa trail in the foreground, with the application site visible above the vegetation. Beyond the application site Knockacarrigeen is visible on the left hand side of the image with glimpses toward Tuam in the distance beyond. The centre of the image affords views into east County Galway while the right hand side of the image provides views towards Corrofin, with the Cloonlusk Wind Farm visible in the distance. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted crossing the local road and running across land adjoining the site.	**High** – used by tourists and recreational visitors to a pNHA, nature reserve and site of archaeological interest.	**Low -** The proposed development would not substantially alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would be visible within this view and therefore would mark a slight change, though not one that is incongruous with the baseline. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **High** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to a **moderate-slight** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	Existing vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	Yes



Photomontage	The photomontage illustrates that some glimpses of the proposed block storage yard would be visible from the south-eastern tip of the walking route at Knockmaa. The change over the baseline is however not significant as the block storage yard occupies a very small part of the panoramic view and the use is visually consistent with the adjoining extraction area. Opportunities to screen the application site from this viewpoint are limited due to the higher elevation of the viewpoint above the site, however vegetation in the middle and fore ground will over time mature and offer additional screening to the site.



VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP7 R333 at entrance to Castle Hacket House	The view is from the R333 towards the site with Knockmaa visible in the right hand side of the image and Knockacarrigeen is visible at the centre of the images. The view depicts an agricultural landscape enclosed by post and wire fencing, hedgerows and tree lines. The site itself not visible due to the local topography.	**High –** used by tourists and recreational visitors to a pNHA, nature reserve and site of archaeological interest.	**Negligible -** This is an 'illustrative view' used to confirm the absence of any potential for visual impact from this route and receptor. The Proposed Development will be thoroughly screened from here by a combination of topography and vegetation. The magnitude is, therefore, Negligible by default.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **High** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to a **slight-imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP8 L2112 east of site	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls, hedgerows and treelines. Glimpses of rural dwellings are visible in the left hand side. Visual detractors include powerlines and telegraph lines.	**Low -** Local road used by quarry & agricultural traffic, commuters & residents.	**Negligible -** This is an 'illustrative view' used to confirm the absence of any potential for visual impact from this viewpoint. The Proposed Development will be thoroughly screened from here by a combination of topography and vegetation. The magnitude is, therefore, Negligible by default.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **Low** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No mitigation required as application site not visible from this viewpoint - this view would not be altered.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP9 L2112 south-east of application site.	The view is from the L2112 depicting an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. Knockmaa is visible in the background as a tree-covered hill, with Castlefeecul Wood visible immediately to the rear of the application site. The Cloon-Headford 38KV power line is noted running across land adjoining the site. Telegraph lines are noted crossing the foreground. The site itself is visible as a strong linear hedgerow formed of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, with glimpses of the existing north-western face of the quarry above the hedgerow as well as some of the overburden storage areas.	**Medium –** Local road used by quarry visitors, agricultural traffic and visitors to business. However the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible -** The existing quarry is largely screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application, however some glimpses of the quarry are visible above the hedgerow and between gaps in the hedgerow which occurred following storms during winter 2024/25. The lost trees are being replaced with semi-mature trees. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting at the application site. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **low** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **negligible** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP9 Local Road at Ballydotia West	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. Knockmaa is visible on the left hand side of the image with Castlefeecul Wood at the centre. In the middle ground there is a cluster of agricultural buildings and rural dwellings. The application site is discerned by the strong linear of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, marking the south-western and south-eastern site boundaries, with the glimpses of the working area visible above the hedge line.	**Medium –** Local road used by agricultural traffic, commuters & residents, however the view does include Knockmaa.	**Negligible –** The existing quarry is largely screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application, however some glimpses of the quarry are visible above the hedgerow. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting and topography. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to an **Imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP10 L2111 at Carheens	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. The foreground includes the boundary walls of those dwellings. Glimpses of rural dwellings are visible in the middle ground. Knockmaa is visible on the left hand side of the image with Castlefeecul Wood at the centre of the image behind the application site. The application site is discerned by the strong linear of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, marking the south-western and south-eastern site boundaries, with the glimpses of the working area visible through a short gap in the hedgerow where the trees are less mature.	**Medium –** L2111 used by agricultural traffic & residents, however the view does include Knockmaa.	**Negligible –** The existing quarry is largely screened by the existing boundary vegetation at the application, however some glimpses of the quarry are visible above the hedgerow and in existing gaps. These gaps occurred following winter 2024/25 storms. The lost trees are being replaced with semi-mature trees.The proposed development would not alter the view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting and topography. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to an **imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP11 N83 east of site	The view is from the N83 towards the site with Knockmaa visible in the centre of the image and Knockacarrigeen visible on the right. The view depicts an agricultural landscape enclosed stone walls, hedgerows and tree lines. The application site is discerned by the strong linear of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, marking the south-western and south-eastern site boundaries, with the glimpses of the working area visible through a short gap in the hedgerow where the trees are less mature.	**Medium –** Regional road used by quarry residents and commuters. However the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible –** This route provides views but at high speed with the focus directed away from the site. Knockmaa is however notable within the view as a highpoint. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting and topography. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to an **Imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP12 M17 Motorway	The view is long distance (7km) from the M18 towards the site with Knockmaa visible in the centre of the image and Knockacarrigeen visible on the right. The view depicts an agricultural landscape enclosed stone walls, hedgerows and tree lines, with rural housing dotted throughout. A number of powerlines are visible crossing the landscape, including the Cashla - Cloon 110kV and the Cloon - Headford - Tuam South - Claregalway 38 kV. The application site is discerned by the strong linear of Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*, marking the south-western and south-eastern site boundaries, with the glimpses of the working area above the treeline. At this distance, it is difficult at discern the quarry features.	**Medium** – High speed motorway used by residents and commuters, however the view includes Knockmaa.	**Negligible –** This route provides views but at high speed, with the focus directed away from the site. Knockmaa is however notable within the view as a highpoint. The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
				Duration	Long-term
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to an **Imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Reversibility	Reversible
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Photomontage	No

VP No.	Description	Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	VP No.	Sensitivity
VP13 L2122 at Bunnahevna	The view is comprised of a local road set in an agricultural landscape enclosed by dry stone walls. Knockmaa is visible in the distance (7km) as is Castlefeecul Wood. At this distance it is difficult to discern features and the quarry is only discernible as a lighter colour against the dark green of the Lawson Cypress *(Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)*.	**Medium –** Local road used by agricultural traffic, commuters & residents, however the view does include Knockmaa.	**Negligible –** The proposed development would not alter this view as it would comprise the continuation of the existing quarry. The proposed quarry storage yard would not be visible within this view as it would be blocked by the existing boundary planting. The most notable effect would therefore be the continued use of the site, which in winter months, this may appear as lights associated with vehicles on the site.	Quality	Negative
				Extent	Local
				Probability	Likely
				Frequency	Daily
Significance	The **Medium** sensitivity judgement coupled with a **Low** magnitude, corresponds to an **Imperceptible** significance of visual impact. In terms of EPA(2022), this is considered to be not significant.			Duration	Long-term
Mitigation	No additional mitigation required, however as the existing vegetation is key to screening the quarry from this viewpoint, this vegetation should be retained and "gapped up" where gaps occur.			Reversibility	Reversible
				Photomontage	No

Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

12.143 The main mitigation by avoidance measure employed in this instance is the siting of the proposed development within an existing quarry rather than selecting a new site with no history of excavation.

12.144 It is proposed to retain the existing screening berms and hedgerow along the perimeter of the proposed extraction area. It is noted that the existing planting is itself a conspicuous feature and it is proposed to soften this through additional native planting to supplement the existing hedgerow. Any gaps that form in the hedgerow as a result of tree loss should be filled as soon as possible.

12.145 The existing stockpiles should on completion of extraction be redistributed within the quarry floor to facilitate the restoration of the quarry.

Cumulative Effects

12.146 In the assessment of cumulative effects, any other existing, permitted or proposed developments in the surrounding area have been considered where they have the potential to generate cumulative effects with the proposed development. Chapter 17 sets out the methodology for identifying those developments which have the potential to cause cumulative effects. It excluded developments that were already constructed as these are already assessed as part of the baseline. Also excluded were small scale developments that would not have the potential to cause cumulative effects. The following developments (refer to Figure 16.1) were short-listed as having the potential to result in cumulative effects:

- 2460013: For the development of a quarry for the extraction of sand in a phased basis over an area of c. 6.2 ha by an average depth of 3m from existing ground levels. The development will consist of: i. Installation of a processing plant and associated components; ii. Stockpiling of topsoil removed during quarrying for future implementation of a restoration plan; iii. Construction of a refuelling area; iv. Installation of a site office (30 sqm); v. Installation of a wastewater holding tank (63.6 sqm); vi. Installation of a weighbridge and wheel wash; vii. Installation of a new site entrance along with road reprofiling works on the L2232; viii. Installation of a groundwater well; ix. Provision of drainage infrastructure including a new hydrocarbon interceptor and surface drains on hardstanding; x. All associated site development and operational works; and xi. Site restoration following the cessation of sand extraction works. Permission is sought for an operational lifetime of 10 years. The Planning Application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement. Currently being considered under appeal ABP-321022-24.

12.147 Due to the distance between the above site and the application site, it is not anticipated that any cumulative effects would occur.

Decommissioning Effects

Restoration Proposals

12.148 Decommissioning effects will arise from implementation of the restoration plan previously agreed in principle with Galway County Council. Key elements include:

- Progressive infill of the quarry void with clean inert soil and stone (and Article 27 by-product where appropriate) to create a gently graded landform tying into surrounding topography;
- Removal of fixed plant, surfacing and hardstanding no longer required, followed by localised ripping and soil placement to encourage vegetation establishment;
- Seeding of the main landform with a species-rich calcareous grassland mix and selective planting of native scrub (hawthorn, hazel, spindle, guelder-rose) to replicate the limestone grassland / scrub mosaic characteristic of Knockmaaa Hill;
- Creation of small ephemeral wet areas to enhance habitat diversity and support amphibians and invertebrates;
- Retention of perimeter berms (where safe) to screen the restored landform.

Landscape Effect of Restoration

12.149 On completion of the above works the visually prominent raw quarry faces and floor will be softened by vegetation and the landform will read as an extension of the surrounding farmland / Knockmaaa Hill mosaic. The intervention will replace an active industrial landscape with a semi-natural grassland / scrub system that mirrors local character, reinstates topographic coherence and provides new biodiversity value. Consequently, in LVIA terms the restored site will experience a Moderate-slight Beneficial landscape effect (an improvement on the previous assessment of Minor Beneficial) and will contribute positively to the wider landscape setting.

Residual Effects

12.150 The proposal to continue the use of the existing quarry would result in permanent changes to the landform, however the effect on landscape character will be a very localised (within the application site). The magnitude of effect is therefore negligible from outside the site boundaries. The significance of landscape impact is deemed to be **slight/imperceptible** which is not considered to be significant in terms of landscape character. The restoration proposals offer opportunities for biodiversity net gain, with a greater variety of habitats present on the site after restoration that would have been prior to the commencement of development.

12.151 The visual effect was assessed at 13 viewpoints, the majority of which occur within 1km of the site. The existing quarry was visible from a number of viewpoints to the south of the site. In the majority viewpoints, the magnitude of change will be typically “negligible”, as the proposal would comprises the continuation of the existing quarry and therefore would not intrude into the view any more than presently occurs. The overall visual amenity would not therefore be altered. Two viewpoints were assigned a magnitude of change of “low”, however the effect of this change would not be significant in visual terms.

12.152 It is also anticipated that the existing planting would further mature over time and would ensure that any views would be further minimised.

References

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022)
- Draft Advice Notes on Current Practice in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EPA, 2015)
- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment publication entitled Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013).
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations (2021).
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 – Visual Representation
- Council of Europe, 2000. European Landscape Convention. [Online] Available at: https://rm.coe.int/1680080621

FIGURES