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Introduction

- 3.1 In the consideration of alternatives below, the issues of alternative sources of aggregates; and alternative locations, designs / layouts and processes have been addressed.
- 3.2 The proposed development comprises the extension of the existing permitted quarry, refer to EIAR Chapter 2 for further details. The application area is located in an area favourable to extraction activities, due to, *inter alia* the:
 - Established long history of extraction within the existing quarry at this location;
 - Proven high quality limestone reserves of strategic importance for the long-term supply of construction materials and concrete aggregates to Cork and the southern region;
 - Established road access and traffic routes;
 - Best practice industry standard extraction and processing methods being used;
 - Low development costs due to infrastructure already being in place at the existing quarry.
- 3.3 Supply and demand data for individual quarries is not publicly available as it is commercially sensitive information.

However, recent independent analysis carried out for and published by the Irish Concrete Federation (ICF) – “Essential Aggregates: An Evidence-Based Assessment to Inform Ireland’s Planning Policy” May 2025, includes an assessment of the current replenishment rates of authorised aggregate reserves in Ireland. Its key findings include:

‘Over the past eight years (2017-2024) the ‘replenishment’ of aggregate reserves has been running behind annual consumption. On average, only 61% of the annual consumption has been replenished by means of new planning authorisations’.

‘At current levels of land area authorisation, the replenishment rate of authorised aggregates will fall to 52% over the 2025 – 2040 period as demand for aggregates increases due to Ireland’s growing population’ and the requirements of strategic national plans such as Project Ireland 2040.

This clearly confirms that the aggregate replenishment rates are falling significantly below the market demand and there is a need for significant aggregate replenishment by means of new planning permissions for extension to existing quarries or new greenfield quarry development.

On this basis there is clear need to replenish and provide for long term aggregate reserves such as the proven limestone reserves at Rossmore Quarry, through the granting of permission for the proposed development.

Do Nothing Alternative

- 3.4 If the proposed development does not take place, the existing quarry would remain in operation and on permanent cessation of extraction be restored to natural habitat after-uses as per the previously permitted proposals.

Alternative Sources of Aggregates

- 3.5 In the medium term there are no real alternatives to the current land-based sources of construction aggregates.
- 3.6 The volume of C&D waste suitable for recycling into secondary aggregates is very low in comparison to the overall demand for aggregates. The demographic spread of the population results in only the large urban centres potentially being capable of generating sufficient volumes of construction and demolition (C&D) waste to justify a commercial operation producing secondary aggregates going forward.
- 3.7 In the longer term (>25 years), there may be some scope for extraction of minerals from marine sources.
- 3.8 In the absence of significant volumes of aggregates from recycled / secondary and marine sources, it is clear that land-based deposits (such as the proven reserves at Rossmore Quarry) will continue to be the main source of construction aggregates in Ireland, including Cork and the wider southern region.

Alternative Locations

- 3.9 The current planning application is an extension of the existing permitted quarry at Rossmore, refer to EIAR Chapter 2 for further details.
- 3.10 The only alternative location option available to the Applicant relates to development of a new replacement 'greenfield' quarry with limestone reserves in Cork to serve the established clients and markets in this region.
- 3.11 At the current time, there is no suitable alternative replacement quarry location with limestone reserves available to the applicant in County Cork. It is generally accepted that the overall timeframe for development of a 'greenfield' quarry site (from initial site selection, land acquisition, preparation of a planning application and accompanying EIAR, through planning process and site development to extraction of aggregates) takes between 5 and 10 years.
- 3.12 Notwithstanding the above, the proposed development would be beneficial in planning terms by eliminating the need for:
- Extracting additional materials from other quarries within the county, should the applicant be unable to develop a new 'greenfield' site in the event that the existing quarry ceases operation. This would result in faster depletion of aggregate resources at these other quarry locations and potentially result in future intensification of those operations;

- Development of a 'greenfield' site at some other location within the county where there is little or no previous extractive industry land use;
- Haulage of limestone aggregates by road from other quarries within, and outside the county, with potentially significantly longer haulage distances and increased traffic levels on the wider road network.

- 3.13 The proposed extension of the existing quarry at Rossmore will assist in facilitating extraction from an existing established and proven limestone reserves, with no significant increase in environmental emissions.
- 3.14 This development is not like an industrial factory, for example, that can be located at many locations. It is a resource tied development. Limestone reserves can only be worked where they exist and where the environmental effects of working such resources can be managed to an acceptable level.
- 3.15 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed development, subject to continued implementation of best environmental management practice and compliance with appropriate planning controls (i.e. planning conditions and recommended emission limit values for the sector) is preferable in an overall planning context, compared to the development of a new replacement 'greenfield' site at some alternative location in Cork.

Alternative Designs / Layouts

- 3.16 Geological assessment and drilling has confirmed the continuation of limestone reserves in the proposed extension area.
- 3.17 Alternative designs within the proposed extension area were considered. The design was optimised to provide for an access tunnel under the existing private road to link the extension area to the existing quarry.

Alternative Processes

- 3.18 Breedon Ireland are a company with expertise and experience in the field of quarrying, aggregates production and the manufacture of value-added products.
- 3.19 As the proposed development comprises an extension of an existing quarry with established processing facilities, alternative processes are not considered relevant in this instance.