

Appendix B
Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment



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LVI A

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



West Cork Distillers

Skibbereen
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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.1 Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared in respect of a Section 5 Declaration request with respect to a Tank Farm at the West Cork Distillers site on the outskirts of Skibbereen in County Cork. This LVIA report describes the landscape context of the proposed project and assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment. Although closely linked, landscape and visual impacts are assessed separately.

Landscape Impact Assessment (LIA) relates to assessing 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.

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).

This LVIA uses methodology as prescribed in the following guidance documents:

- Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment publication entitled Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013).

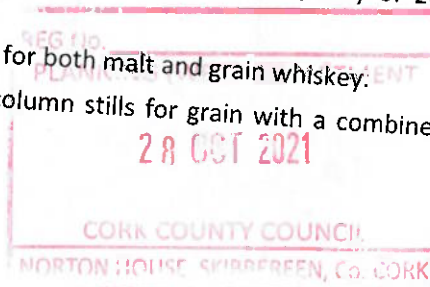
Statement of Authority

This LVIA was prepared by Macro Works Ltd. Relevant experience includes landscape and visual assessments for a vast range of industrial, commercial, and infrastructural developments over the past 21 years.

1.2 Description of the Proposed Development

West Cork Distillers submitted a Section 5 (exempted development) application to Cork County Council to cover minor modifications to works permitted under two planning applications. The manufacturing process permitted under Planning Register Ref. Nos. 17/365 and 19/779 comprises the following main elements:

- External bulk storage of maize and malted and unmalted grains with a capacity of 280 tonnes;
- In the Marsh Road Distillery, there are 24 fermenters for both malt and grain whiskey;
- There are 11 pot stills for malt whiskey and three column stills for grain with a combined annual capacity of 4.5million litres per annum;



- Gin, vodka and poitin production, with an annual capacity of 500,000 litres of alcohol;
- Fermented wine (Glán) production using reverse osmosis, with 8No. 60,000lts fermentation tanks, and with an annual production capacity of 8 million litres of fermented wine;
- Bulk spirits and fermented wine storage with a capacity of 700,000 litres;
- Whiskey warehousing (for maturation) with a capacity of c. 56,000 casks;
- General warehousing and storage facilities with a storage capacity of 200,000 bottles;
- Bottling capacity of c. 4 million bottles per annum; and
- Site ancillary services including gas boiler, cooling water system, laboratory, administration and welfare areas.

This report has been prepared to assess the potential effects of minor modifications to the industrial site as permitted under Planning Register Ref. Nos. 17/365 and 19/779 which comprise:

- a) alterations and extensions to the tank farms permitted under Planning Register Ref. Nos. 17/365 and 19/779; and
- b) the installation of new cooling plant and equipment.

1.3 Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

Production of this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment involved:

- A desktop study to establish an appropriate study area, relevant landscape and visual designations in the Cork County Development Plan (CDP) 2014-2020, as well as other sensitive visual receptors;
- Fieldwork to establish the landscape character of the receiving environment and to confirm the set of viewpoints to be used for the visual assessment stage;
- 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.

For more detailed information on the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Criteria, as well as assessment methodology, please see **Appendix A**.

1.4 Definition of Study Area

On the basis that this is a relatively contained and already industrial setting the development is not visible from a wide area and thus, a 500m radius study area is considered to be sufficient for the LVIA.



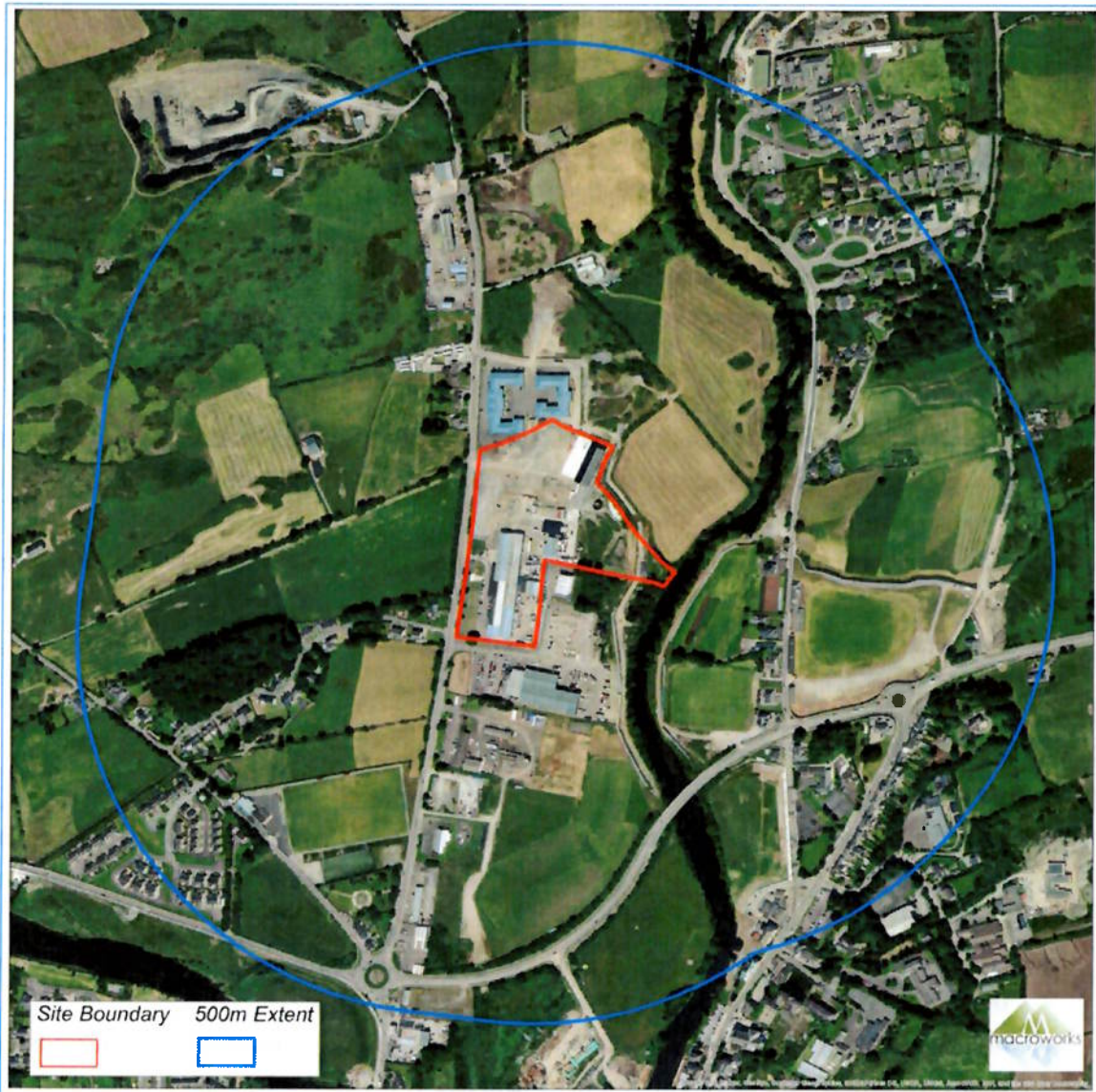


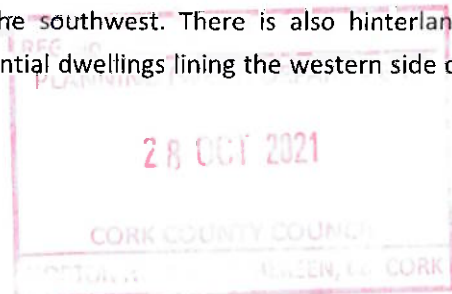
Figure 1 – 500m radius study area.

1.5 Description of the Receiving Environment

1.5.1 Baseline Context

The West Cork Distillers site is contained within an industrial area on the northern outskirts of the settlement of Skibbereen, which is a key service centre in the context of West Cork. It is separated from the town centre by the N71 ring road and the River Ilen that generally defines the northern perimeter of the core settlement.

The site lines the eastern side of the north-south running L4211 where it is flanked by other industrial development on either side and also backs onto the River Ilen. Across the L4211 to the west is farmland with some residential development just to the southwest. There is also hinterland farming to the east of the River Ilen with a stretch of residential dwellings lining the western side of



the R593 just beyond. The corridor of the river is also lined by embankments and steel retaining walls, which serve as flood protection measures.

The site itself is dominated by the industrial infrastructure of the West Cork Distillers facility which consists of tanks, storage buildings, circulation areas and parking as well as an architecturally striking distillery / office facility fronting the L4112 road.

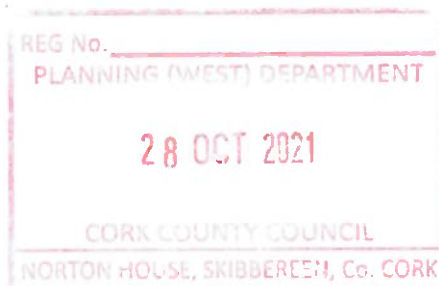


Figure 2 – View towards site from N71 bridge over the River Ilan

1.6 Planning Policy

1.6.2 Cork County Development Plan (CDP) 2014-2020

The current Cork County Development Plan contains a Landscape Character Assessment and within this, the site is shown to be contained within LCA 9 – ‘Broad Marginal Middle Ground and Lowland Basin’, which is indicated as having Low Landscape Value, Medium landscape Sensitivity, and only Local Landscape Importance. Whilst there is a ‘High Value Landscape’ indicated to the southwest associated with LCA 4 – ‘Rugged Ridge Peninsulas’, this is well outside of the study area and will not be influenced by the development. There are also no designated scenic routes indicated within the study area.



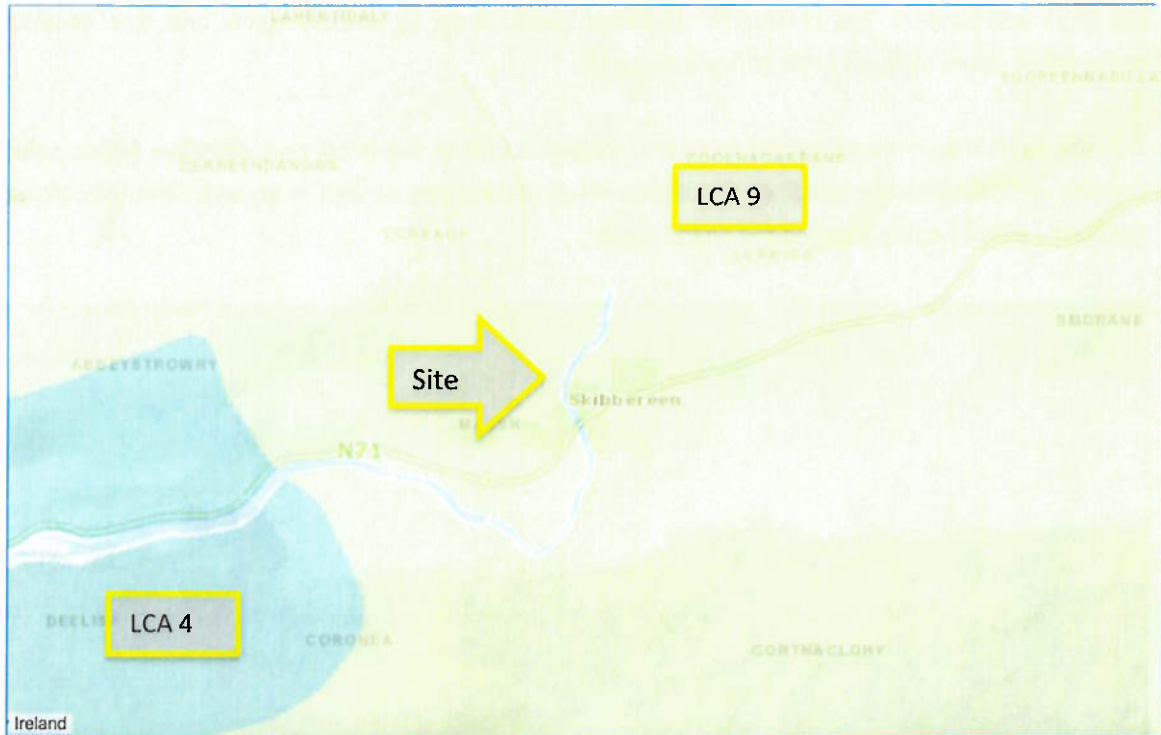


Figure 3 - Cork County Development Plan Landscape Character Areas within the vicinity of the site

1.6 Impact Assessment

1.6.1 Landscape Effects

In this instance it is not considered warranted to enter into a detailed assessment of physical landscape effects within this industrial site or effects on landscape character beyond the site. This is on the basis that it is a pre-existing industrial context where the minor alterations to the permitted extension developments will not have a materially different effect on the landscape to those originally permitted. Instead, the main focus of this assessment will be the visual impacts of the altered elements and whether these can be further mitigated to reduce visual impacts.

1.7 Visual Impact Assessment

1.7.1 Identification of Viewshed Reference Points as a Basis for Assessment

Viewshed Reference Points (VRP's) are the locations used to study the visual impacts of a proposal in detail. In this instance five viewpoints were selected from within the immediate context of the West Cork Distillers site, but all from the eastern quarters of the study area. This is on the basis the pre-existing WCD facility fronting the L4112 screens the new aspects of the development from the western quarters where views are already strongly influenced by industrial development both within and around the site. Furthermore, discussions with the planners from Cork County Council indicated that it is westerly views across the river that is the chief concern in respect of the development as completed. The following Viewpoints have been used;



- VP1 – R593 northeast of site
- VP2 – Junction of R593 / local road northeast of site
- VP3 – R593 east of site
- VP4 – Bridge on N71 southeast of site
- VP5 – Sports pitch south of site

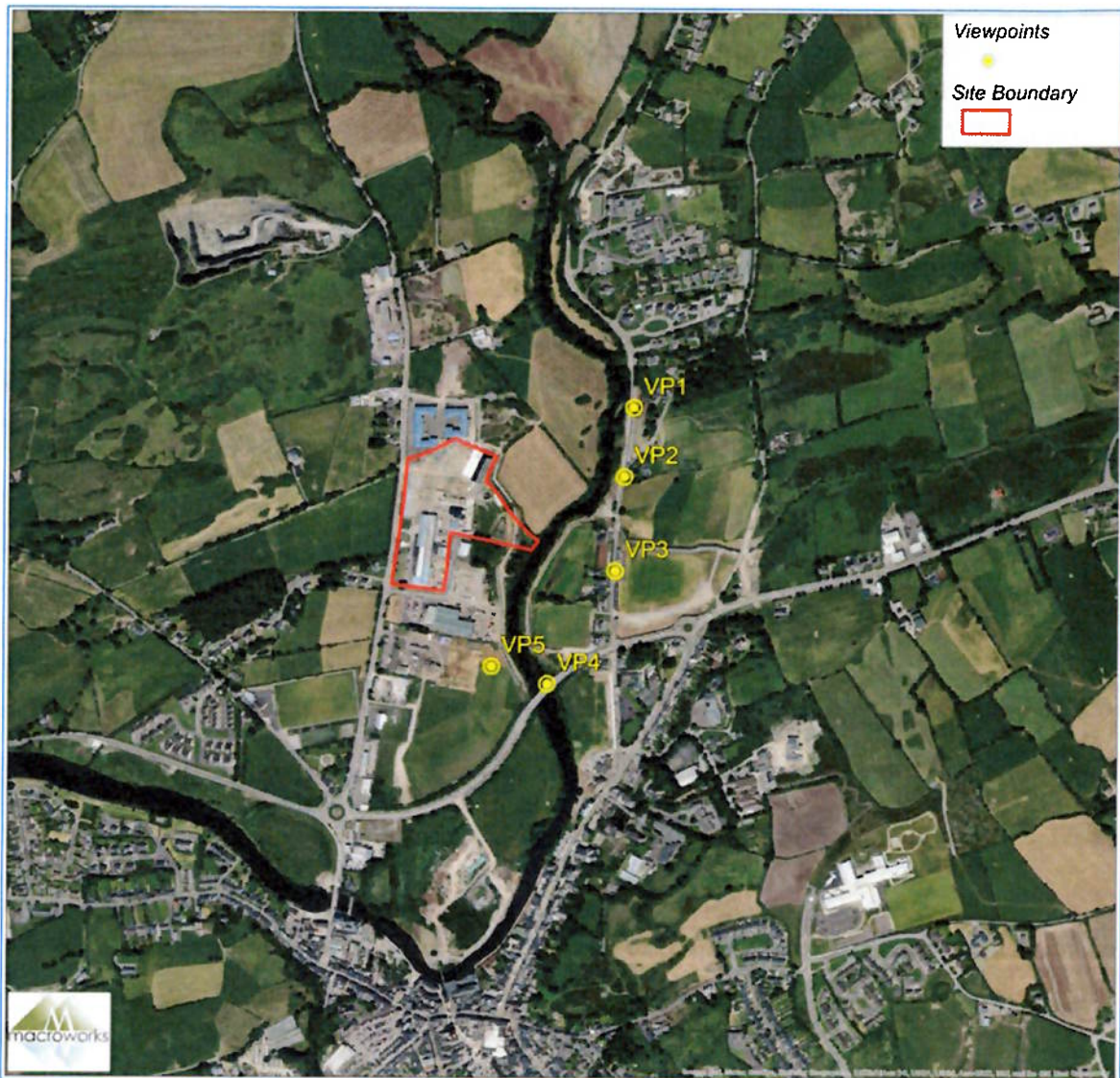
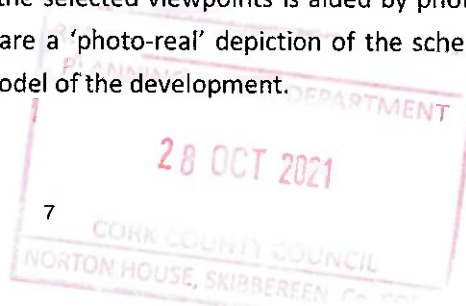


Figure 4 - VP Location Map

1.7.2 Magnitude of Visual Effects

The assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the proposed development. Photomontages are a 'photo-real' depiction of the scheme within the view utilising a rendered three-dimensional model of the development.



1.7.2.1 Description and Sensitivity of Existing Views

The views from VP1, VP2 and VP3 which are all contained on the R593 regional road and looking in a general westerly direction are very similar in terms of context. They represent road users as well as the line of dwellings that front the western side of the R593 in the vicinity. These views all consist of a road frontage wall backed by farmed fields and then the partially wooded corridor of the River Ilen flanked by flood alleviation embankments and walls. Within the West Cork Distillers site can be seen a series of vertical cylindrical tanks as well as horizontal tanks on a rack. Whilst there are some other elements of the facility visible beyond and to the sides of the recently constructed 'tank farm' they are much less conspicuous. These views are all considered to be of a Medium-low sensitivity.

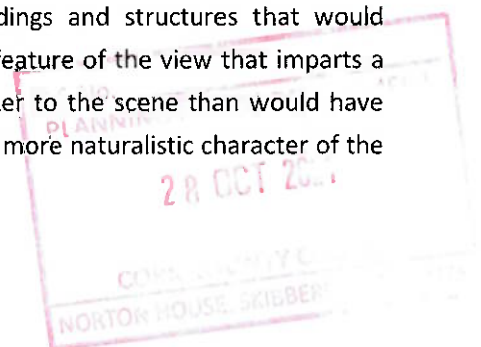
The view from VP4 is northwards along the River Ilen, where the right hand embankment appears modified to form a flood alleviation berm covered in scrub and grasses and backed by a sports pitch. Further on can be seen a steel flood retention wall lining the river and topped by fencing. The left hand side of the river is more naturalistic with a thick band of riparian vegetation flanking the watercourse, albeit with factory roofs and the tank farm from the WCD site rising just beyond. Scrub covered hills form a middle distance backdrop to the northwest. This view is also considered to be of Medium-low sensitivity.

The view from VP5 takes in a foreground sports pitch followed by an open view across the rear yards of the industrial developments that line the L4112. This includes the tank farm from the WCD site in the middle distance amongst equally prominent buildings and structures within that site. All of these sites are contained by a 2-3m high retaining wall in the direction of the river (right) with riparian vegetation penetrating above. Notwithstanding, the recreational nature of the foreground, this view is considered to be of Low sensitivity.

1.7.2.2 Nature and Magnitude of Visual Effects (Pre-mitigation)

From **VP1** and **VP3** the new tank farm is partially visible at a modest, but noticeable scale through and between the riparian vegetation that lines the western side of the River Ilen. Whilst representing a noticeable increase in the intensity of industrial development within the WCD site and with it a stronger sense of the industrial within these rural hinterland scenes, it is not a distinct visual change and does not unduly compromise the visual amenity in either case. The visual impact magnitude is considered to be Low and in combination with the Medium-low sensitivity judgement, the significance of effect is **Slight**.

From **VP2** the new tank farm is clearly visible through a vegetation gap beyond the river corridor. Although it sits to the fore of other pre-existing industrial buildings and structures that would otherwise have been visible within the WCD site, it is a noticeable feature of the view that imparts a greater intensity of development and more overt industrial character to the scene than would have been the case prior its construction. Furthermore, it draws from the more naturalistic character of the



river corridor and associated riparian vegetation. Thus, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Medium-low and in combination with the Medium-low sensitivity judgement, the significance of effect is **Moderate-slight**.

From **VP4** the new tank farm is visible on direct alignment with the river corridor, albeit in the context of other industrial building and structures from the subject site and adjacent sites. It is also seen in the context of steel flood alleviation walls that also have an industrial / infrastructure character. Thus the tank farm represents a minor intensification of industrial development that encroaches marginally closer to the river corridor. The visual impact magnitude is considered to be Low and in combination with the Medium-low sensitivity judgement, the significance of effect is **Slight**.

From **VP5** the new tank farm is seen in the middle ground of a scene that is dominated by industrial development and although it increase the extent and intensity of such development it has little bearing on visual amenity. Thus, the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to be Low-negligible and in combination with the Low sensitivity judgement, the significance of effect is **Slight-imperceptible**.

1.8 Proposed Mitigation Measures

In this instance a two-pronged approach to mitigation will be employed with each measure working in combination with the other. The first measure is to provide a dispersed and intermittent colour scheme for the tank farm with individual tanks assigned a dark, medium or light tone on the green-grey colour range (excluding stainless steel tanks). Aside from being more recessive tones than the current off-white and metallic greys of the tank farm, the combination of dark and light will break up the perceived massing by generating a sense of solid and void, and thereby, present as less of block of structure when viewed intermittently through and between section of intervening vegetation. The green-grey colour range will also integrate visually with the same intervening riparian vegetation when seen across the river from the east and the lightest colour will recede against a backdrop of sky due to the low degree of contrast.

The second form of mitigation is the planting of the eastern site boundary with a 5m wide band of vegetation intended to integrate visually with the band of riparian vegetation that already flanks the western side of the River Ilen adjacent and to the southeast of the site. This will be planted with a triple staggered row of native whips and semi-mature trees in order to provide a consolidated screen throughout the seasons. Species will be selected to be compatible with the existing riparian vegetation.

1.9 Residual Visual Impacts

The mitigation measures have been principally designed to reduce visual impacts in the context of views across the River Ilen from the east. In this respect, the combination of the dispersed tank colour scheme of green-grey tones and the proposed screen planting serve to considerably reduce the impact from **VP1** and **VP3**. In both cases the tank farm will be barely discernible and the current situation will be noticeably improved. Consequently, the visual impact magnitude is deemed to reduce to Low-negligible or even Negligible and the residual significance reduces to **Slight-imperceptible**.



Although the post-mitigation view of the tank farm is considerably reduced, softened and integrated from **VP2**, the tops of the tanks will still rise in silhouette against the sky. In this instance the magnitude of visual impact is deemed to reduce to Low and the residual significance to **Slight** following mitigation establishment. Similarly for **VP4**, the upper portions of the vertical tanks will remain visible above intervening vegetation (existing and proposed), but the tank farm will be integrated, softened and partially screened such that it will be less noticeable. In this case the visual impact magnitude will reduce to Low-negligible and the residual significance to **Slight-imperceptible**.

The proposed mitigation measures were not designed with industrial context views such as VP5 in mind. The colour scheme of the tanks may even appear slightly obscure in the context of this view, whilst the proposed screen planting is unlikely to be visible at all. Consequently, the significance of visual impact is not considered to reduce at VP5 and remains Slight-imperceptible.

1.10 Summary

This LVIA is prepared in respect of a Section 5 Declaration application relating to the recently constructed tank farm at the West Cork Distillers site in Skibbereen that varies slightly from the associated planning permissions. It is not considered that the principle of the permitted development is at issue and thus, the impact on landscape character is not deemed to be materially different to that anticipated at the time permission was granted for the tank farm. Instead, the key issue (as indicated by Cork County Council Planners) is westward views of the new tank farm across the corridor of the River Ilen from the east.

Five viewpoints were selected for the visual impact assessment and these are all contained within the eastern quarters of the 500m radius study area. Whilst significant visual impacts are not considered to occur at any of these (highest being 'Moderate-slight' from VP2), the opportunity for effective mitigation in the form of colour scheme and screen planting was identified. In all except one view (VP5) the residual visual impact significance was reduced by at least one judgement level, resulting in significance of no greater than 'Slight' or 'Slight-imperceptible' across all viewpoints. Notwithstanding, the minor variation in the constructed development relative to the granted permissions, the residual impact will be lower than anticipated at the time of granting the original permission, if the mitigation measures now proposed, are implemented.



Appendix A

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

The following appendix should be read in conjunction with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

Landscape Impact Assessment Criteria

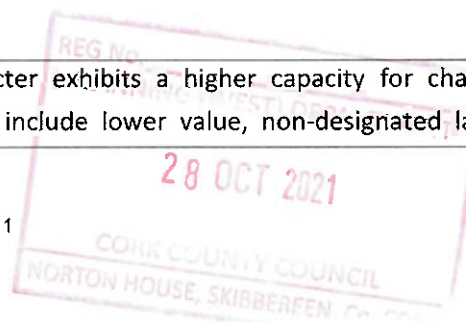
When assessing the potential impacts on the landscape resulting from a proposed development, the following criteria are considered:

- Landscape character, value and sensitivity;
- Magnitude of likely impacts;
- Significance of landscape effects.

The sensitivity of the landscape to change is the degree to which a particular landscape receptor, Landscape Character Area (LCA) or landscape feature can accommodate changes or new elements, without unacceptable detrimental effects to its essential characteristics. Landscape Value and Sensitivity is classified using the following criteria set out in **Table 1**.

Table A1 Landscape Value and Sensitivity

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), 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 (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), where the principal management objectives are likely to be considered conservation of the existing character.
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

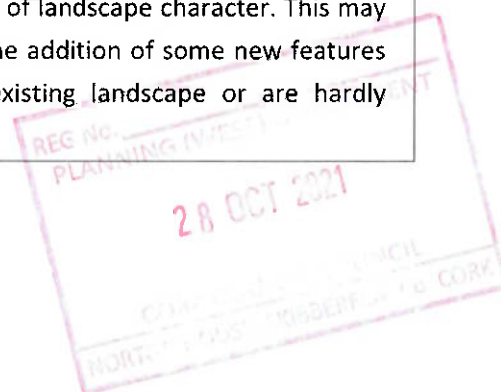


	that may also have some elements or features of recognisable quality, where landscape management objectives include, enhancement, repair and restoration.
Negligible	Areas of landscape character that include derelict, mining, industrial land or are part of the urban fringe where there would be a reasonable 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.

The magnitude of a predicted landscape impact is a product of the scale, extent or degree of change that is likely to be experienced as a result of the proposed development. The magnitude takes into account whether there is a direct physical impact resulting from the loss of landscape components and/or a change that extends beyond the Application Site boundary that may have an effect on the landscape character of the area. **Table 2** refers.

Table A2 Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

Magnitude of Impact	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 overall 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 an overall 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 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.
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.



The significance of a landscape impact is based on a balance between the sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the magnitude of the impact. The significance of landscape impacts is arrived at using the following matrix set out in **Table A3**.

Table A3 Impact Significance Matrix

Scale/ Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptor				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Very High	Profound	Profound-substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Minor
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

Note: The significance matrix provides an indicative framework from which the significance of impact is derived. The significance judgement is ultimately determined by the assessor using professional judgement. 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. Judgements indicated in orange are considered to be 'significant impacts' in EIA terms.

Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

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, weighed against the magnitude of the visual effect.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Unlike landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors has an anthropocentric basis. It considers factors such as the perceived quality and values associated with the view, the landscape context of the viewer, the likely activity they are engaged in and whether this heightens their awareness of the surrounding landscape. A list of the factors considered by the assessor in estimating the level of sensitivity for a particular visual receptor is outlined below and used to establish visual receptor sensitivity at each VRP:



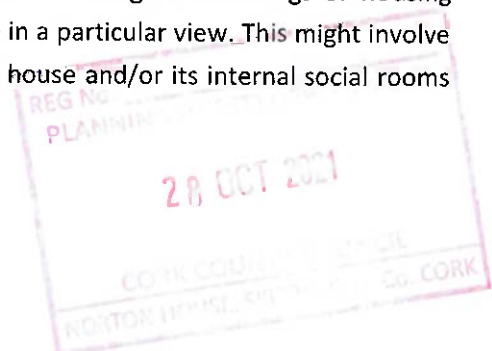
1. **Susceptibility of Receptors** - In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (“IEMA”) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (3rd edition 2013) visual receptors most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity are;

- *“Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area; and*
- *Travellers on road rail or other transport routes where such travel involves recognised scenic routes and awareness of views is likely to be heightened”.*

Visual receptors that are less susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity include;

- *“People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; and*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not their surroundings and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life”.*

2. **Recognised scenic value of the view** (County Development Plan designations, guidebooks, touring maps, postcards etc). These represent a consensus in terms of which scenic views and routes within an area are strongly valued by the population because in the case of County Developments Plans, for example, a public consultation process is required;
3. **Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas.** Again, highly sensitive landscape designations are usually part of a county’s Landscape Character Assessment, which is then incorporated within the County Development Plan and is therefore subject to the public consultation process. Viewers within such areas are likely to be highly attuned to the landscape around them;
4. **Primary views from dwellings.** A proposed development might be seen from anywhere within a particular residential property with varying degrees of sensitivity. Therefore, this category is reserved for those instances in which the design of dwellings or housing estates, has been influenced by the desire to take in a particular view. This might involve the use of a slope or the specific orientation of a house and/or its internal social rooms and exterior spaces;



5. **Intensity of use, popularity.** This relates to the number of viewers likely to experience a view on a regular basis and whether this is significant at county or regional scale;
6. **Connection with the landscape.** This considers whether or not receptors are likely to be highly attuned to views of the landscape i.e. commuters hurriedly driving on busy national route versus hill walkers directly engaged with the landscape enjoying changing sequential views over it;
7. **Provision of elevated panoramic views.** This relates to the extent of the view on offer and the tendency for receptors to become more attuned to the surrounding landscape at locations that afford broad vistas;
8. **Sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity.** Receptors taking in a remote and tranquil scene, which is likely to be fairly static, are likely to be more receptive to changes in the view than those taking in the view of a busy street scene, for example;
9. **Degree of perceived naturalness.** Where a view is valued for the sense of naturalness of the surrounding landscape it is likely to be highly sensitive to visual intrusion by distinctly manmade features;
10. **Presence of striking or noteworthy features.** A view might be strongly valued because it contains a distinctive and memorable landscape feature such as a promontory headland, lough or castle;
11. **Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance.** Such attributes may be evident or sensed by receptors at certain viewing locations, which may attract visitors for the purposes of contemplation or reflection heightening the sense of their surroundings;
12. **Rarity or uniqueness of the view.** This might include the noteworthy representativeness of a certain landscape type and considers whether the receptor could take in similar views anywhere in the broader region or the country;
13. **Integrity of the landscape character.** This looks at the condition and intactness of the landscape in view and whether the landscape pattern is a regular one of few strongly related components or an irregular one containing a variety of disparate components;
14. **Sense of place.** This considers whether there is special sense of wholeness and harmony at the viewing location; and
15. **Sense of awe.** This considers whether the view inspires an overwhelming sense of scale or the power of nature.



Those locations, which are deemed to satisfy many of the above criteria, are likely to be of higher sensitivity. Overall sensitivity may be a result of a number of these factors or, alternatively, a strong association with one or two in particular.

Visual Impact Magnitude

The magnitude of visual effects is determined on the basis of two factors; the visual presence (relative visual dominance) of the proposal and its effect on visual amenity. The magnitude of visual impacts is classified in **Table 4**.

Table A4 Magnitude of Visual Impact

Criteria	Description
Very High	The proposal intrudes into a large proportion or critical part of the available vista and is without question the most noticeable element. A high degree of visual clutter or disharmony is also generated, strongly reducing the visual amenity of the scene
High	The proposal 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 clutter or disharmony is also likely to be generated, appreciably reducing the visual amenity of the scene
Medium	The proposal represents a moderate intrusion into the available vista, is a readily noticeable element and/or it may generate a degree of visual clutter or disharmony, thereby reducing the visual amenity of the scene. Alternatively, it may represent a balance of higher and lower order estimates in relation to visual presence and 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 detract from, and may even enhance, the visual amenity of the scene

Visual Impact Significance

As stated above, the significance of visual impacts is a function of visual receptor sensitivity and visual impact magnitude. This relationship is expressed in the same significance matrix and applies the same EPA definitions of significance as used in respect of landscape impacts (i.e. **Table A3**).

Appendix C

EIA Screening Statement by Rowan



