

10.0 LANDSCAPE

10.1 Methodology

The visual impact of the development on the landscape was assessed as follows:

- The existing landscape in the study area was described and assessed to determine its sensitivity,
- A Landscape Development Proposal was drawn up with measures designed to enhance the immediate surroundings and visual attractiveness of the site,
- The impact of the visibility of the proposed development on the surrounding environment was examined and mitigation strategies were outlined accordingly to reduce any negative impacts on both the landscape of the area and visibility of the site.

The overall visual impact of the development on the landscape was determined based on the results of the landscape assessment, visibility analysis and desktop studies.

The Landscape Development Proposal Report prepared by Tynan and Associates (Landscape Consultancy) and the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment Report are attached in Appendix 9.

10.2 Existing Environment

Site Location

The area of the proposed development is zoned Industrial/Enterprise in the Cork County Development Plan 2003 (refer to Fig. 1.2 Cork County Planning Zones).

Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity Centre which is operated by Cork County Council is adjacent to the site. Other facilities in the vicinity of the site include the Youghal National Car Test Centre, Foxhole IDA Industrial Estate c.350m away on the R634 out of the town and the Foxhole Business Park incorporating Millennium Court office buildings. The nearest dwelling house is at the junction of the site access road and the R634. The site is a brownfield site and currently used to store empty skips and containers.

Elevation

The site occupies a very low-lying elevation, as it is enclosed to a significant extent by the confluence of rivers that surrounds it. Elevations changes across the site are negligible in comparison to the surrounding landscape. The site can be seen from the N25 scenic particularly in Waterford section directly opposite the site. However the Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity Centre is the focal point of this fragmented landscape. The proposed

development will form a linear block between the NCT Centre and the Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity reducing the visual impact of the existing developments.

Aspect and Site Exposure

The relative geographical context of the existing site to its surrounding landscape is significant in terms of the visibility from the site and visibility to the site from the surrounding hinterland. Visibility from the site (in the absence of any new development within it) is enclosed to a certain extent by the slightly more elevated terrain to the south, west and north of the site.

Site Aspect is south facing with the minimal sloping degree of 0-1. Therefore, site exposure is greatest on the eastern and southern side of the site, across the Blackwater Estuary and Youghal Bay.

Landcover and Landuse

The land cover classification within the site is categorized as built landscape and land cover within the hinterland is dominated by both wet and dry grassland. These land covers historically occupy the proposed site area in the form of scrub and rough grassland. The Cork County Development Plan 2003, supports the Landcover classification as the site is located in an area zoned for industrial and enterprise development.

The overall visual impression of the site is a brown field site with a complex of built anthropogenic structures such as high metal fencing and posts, telephone and electricity poles, Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity Centre, the NCT Centre, Foxhole IDA Industrial Estate and Foxhole Business Park incorporating Millennium Court office buildings.

Beyond the site, the landscape of the wider area also demonstrates a blend of natural and anthropogenic features. From most prospects around Youghal, there are a number of man-made features visible, particularly on the horizon. These include the water tower on Cork Hill, the spire of a church in Youghal town and a communications mast. The undulating hills at Youghal Bay are indented with residential developments.

Agricultural practices such as tillage, grasslands and forestry dominate the landuse patterns of the hills.

10.3 Impact Assessment

Impact of the Proposed Development on the Immediate Surroundings

A Landscape Development Proposal was undertaken (Refer to Appendix 9). A Landscape Masterplan and detailed planting specifications for the proposed site was prepared and the

proposed planting is based on the recommendations of Cork Rural Design Guide published by Cork County Council.

This outlines the measures designed to enhance the immediate surroundings and visual attractiveness of the site.

Landscape proposals are shown on Landscape drawing attached in the Landscape Development Report in Appendix 9. The main purpose of the landscape proposals is to provide effective and visually stimulating screening to the proposed development, whilst adding to the existing secure boundary. The primary landscape elements to the site will be positioned along the entire length of the site boundary. The planting shall comprise native/naturalised tree planting and a variety of shrub species.

Impact of the Proposed Development on the Surrounding Environment

A number of viewpoints were selected from vantage points surrounding the site in order to best assess the impact of the proposed development. These viewpoints vary in elevation and orientation around the site. For viewpoint locations see Fig. 10.1. For more specific details on this viewpoints and impacts refer to Appendix 9.

Criteria in the selection of these viewpoints included views of the proposed development from roads and from amenity areas and residential areas. The landscape and visual impact report for Youghal Landfill, prepared on behalf of Cork County Council, was also consulted due to the adjacency of the landfill to the site of the proposed development.

Visual Impact of Proposed Development from Roads

Much of the roadways in the vicinity of the site (i.e. N25 and R634) are well screened by the presence of hedgerows. Therefore the proposed development is not significantly visible from roads. Intermittent views may occur. These will be further obscured by the proposed landscaping measures at the site.

The R634 from Youghal Town to the N25 was also assessed to determine potential visibility. Viewpoint 2 illustrates the level of screening that roadside and grassland vegetation provides of the proposed development from the edge of Youghal Town. Viewpoint 7 provides the best indicator of visibility from the northern end of this section of road. This viewpoint is at an elevated position above the site. The commercial/industrial developments at Foxhole are clearly visible from this location. The absence of any screening on the northern side of these structures renders them highly visible. However, screening of the proposed development from these buildings and from the tree planting detailed in the Landscape Development Report will reduce the visual impact of the development significantly.

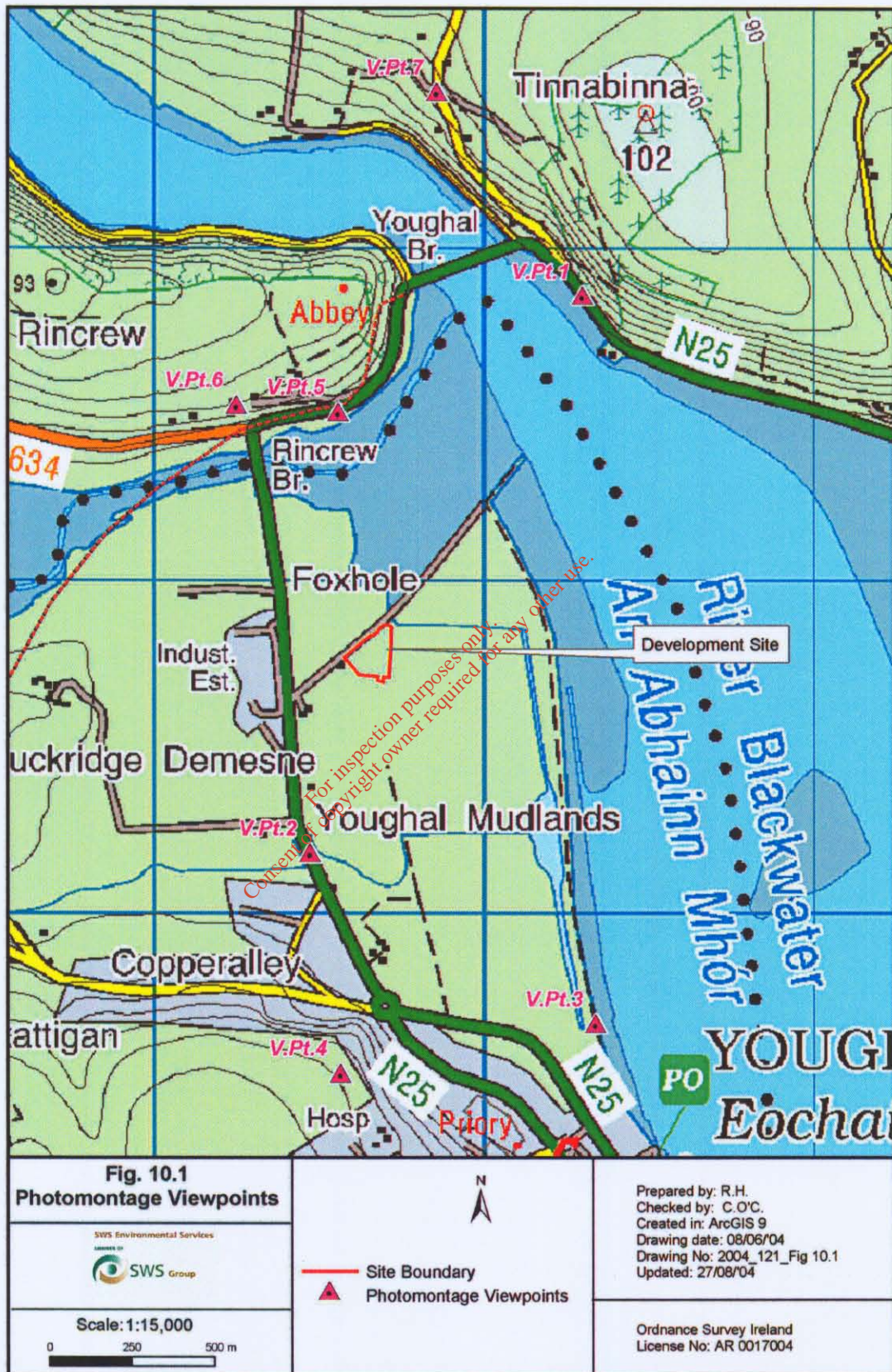


Figure 10.1 Viewpoint Location Map

Visibility from Scenic Routes

Two scenic routes from the Cork County Development Plan (A46 & A47) occur within 5km of the site. However, the site of the proposed development is not visible from either of these routes (Figure 10.2). The site of the proposed development is not within or adjacent to a Scenic Landscape as classified by Cork County Council in the Development Plan, 2003.

Since the site is adjacent to and thus potentially visible also in Co. Waterford, the Waterford County Development Plan, 1999 was also consulted. A Scenic Landscape Evaluation was undertaken by Waterford County Council as part of the Development Plan.

This Evaluation lists landscapes designated as "vulnerable"; in particular the banks of the River Blackwater are mentioned. Vulnerable skylines are also itemised: however, the site of the proposed development is at a low elevation and therefore represents no visual impact on skylines.

Scenic routes in the county are also considered in the Scenic Landscape Evaluation. The N25 from Youghal Bridge to Dungarvan is a designated scenic route (Figure 10.2). Viewpoint 1 was chosen to assess the potential visual impact of the proposed development on this route.

The overall view from this scenic route is of the rolling hillsides meeting the Blackwater Estuary. The proposed development will be on a scale with existing structures in the Foxhole area. The Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity Centre is the focal point of this fragmented landscape. The proposed development will form a linear block between the NCT Centre and the Youghal Landfill and Civic Amenity reducing the visual impact of the existing developments.

The distance from the proposed site as well as landscaping outlined in the Landscape Development Proposal will limit the visibility of the site buildings from this route. Therefore the proposed development will not have a significant visual impact on the view from this scenic route.



Figure 10.2 Scenic Routes

Visual Impact of Proposed Development from Residences

The viewpoints taken surrounding the site are representative of the views that are available from any of the residential houses in each viewpoint area.

Two viewpoint locations were specifically selected (Appendix 9: Viewpoint 4 (Figure 3.5) and Viewpoint 6 (Figure 3.7)) to highlight the views from residential houses or developments.

Both these view points are at higher elevations, looking down over the proposed development.

From Viewpoint 4, existing structures and buildings in the area of the proposed development adds to the anthropogenic nature of the landscape. With the scale of the proposed development not exceeding that of other buildings and the distance from the proposed site to the viewpoint the visibility of the proposed development will be significantly reduced. Therefore, the proposed development will not have a significant visual impact on the residential houses this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 6 is dominated by the R634, from Youghal Town to the N25 and the Foxhole commercial/industrial developments. The scale of the proposed development is in keeping with the existing developments in close proximity to the site. Furthermore, the Landscape Development Proposal will provide screening. Therefore, the proposed development will have a minimal impact on the view from this location.

Overall, the visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding residences of the area will be minor to negligible.

10.4 Mitigation Measures

As illustrated in the photographic viewpoints the impact of the proposed development is minor therefore excessive mitigation measures are not needed.

Measures for the immediate surroundings and visual attractiveness of the site have been outlined in the Landscape Development Proposal (Appendix 9).

As can be seen from the viewpoint photographs the sky is predominately cloudy and grey for the majority of the yearly climatic conditions therefore it is recommended that the buildings in the proposed site will have a 'goose-wing grey' colour to harmonise with the natural background sky.