

**LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**FOR**

**RESTORATION OF EXISTING QUARRY  
FILL WITH INERT SOIL AND STONE**

**AND**

**Provision of a Public Amenity PARK**

**AT**

**TULLYKANE**

**KILMESSAN**

**CO. MEATH**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

This section assesses the landscape & visual impacts arising from the proposed restoration, back fill and the provision of a community amenity park a Quarry at Tullykane, Kilmessan, Co. Meath including assessment of the following:

Landscape Impacts, including: direct impacts upon specific landscape elements within and adjacent to the site; effects on the overall pattern of the landscape elements which give rise to the landscape character of the site and its surroundings; and impacts upon any special interests in and around the site.

Visual Impacts: direct impacts of the development upon views in the landscape; and overall impact on visual amenity.

The site is located entirely within the townland of Tullykane, Kilmessan, Co. Meath, approximately 1km south-east of Kilmessan, Co. Meath on the Kilmessan to Dunsany road L2206.

Tullykane Quarry is a long established development with history of quarrying on the site going back over 100 years. A number of existing quarries are located within the areas designated as exceptional under the Meath Development Plan 2007-2013 for example Mullaghcrone Quarry and Donore Shale Quarry.

The CDP gives a list of Views and Prospects to be Protected (Table 27, page 355), Tullykane is mentioned in View VP 24 along with the following townlands:-

Kilmessan, Swainstown, Dunsany, Killeen, Warrenstown, Clowanstown and Leshemstown.

These townlands are all located along the Skane River Valley from Kilmessan to Drumree/Dunshaughlin with the exception of Tullykane, which is located north of Swainstown. However the County Road L2206 traverses the entire length of the view or prospect to be protected and does run through the southern part of Tullykane.

The views of the quarry from the L2206 are limited to the southern landscaped and planted screening mounds, including a cut lawn and the stone clad entrance walls. The appearance of the quarry boundary along this section of road does not detract from the landscape quality of the passer by.

The application site existing quarry is located largely in an agricultural area. There are a number of residences in the area immediately surrounding the existing facility. The surrounding land use activities are largely agricultural with a mix of tillage and grazing activities predominant.

**Landscape effects assessment:** deals with changes to landscape as a resource. Society as a whole has an interest in this and it is recognised as one of the key dimensions of environmental interest, alongside matters such as biodiversity, or cultural heritage. It is concerned with issues like protected landscapes, the contribution of landscape character to sense of place and quality of life for all, and the way that change may affect individual components of the landscape;

**Visual effects assessment:** is concerned with how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by change in the landscape. This means assessing changes in specific views and in the general visual amenity experienced by particular people in particular places.

## 1.2 SCOPE OF WORK

The landscape and visual impact assessment was carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition 2013 (GLVIA3). The key components of which are:

Introduction – brief description of the development, relevant planning context

Receiving Environment – description of the landscape & visual baseline

Impact Assessment – description of the proposed development in relation to landscape and visual effects

Mitigation Measures – description of the measures which will be incorporated to mitigate any landscape and visual effects of the development.

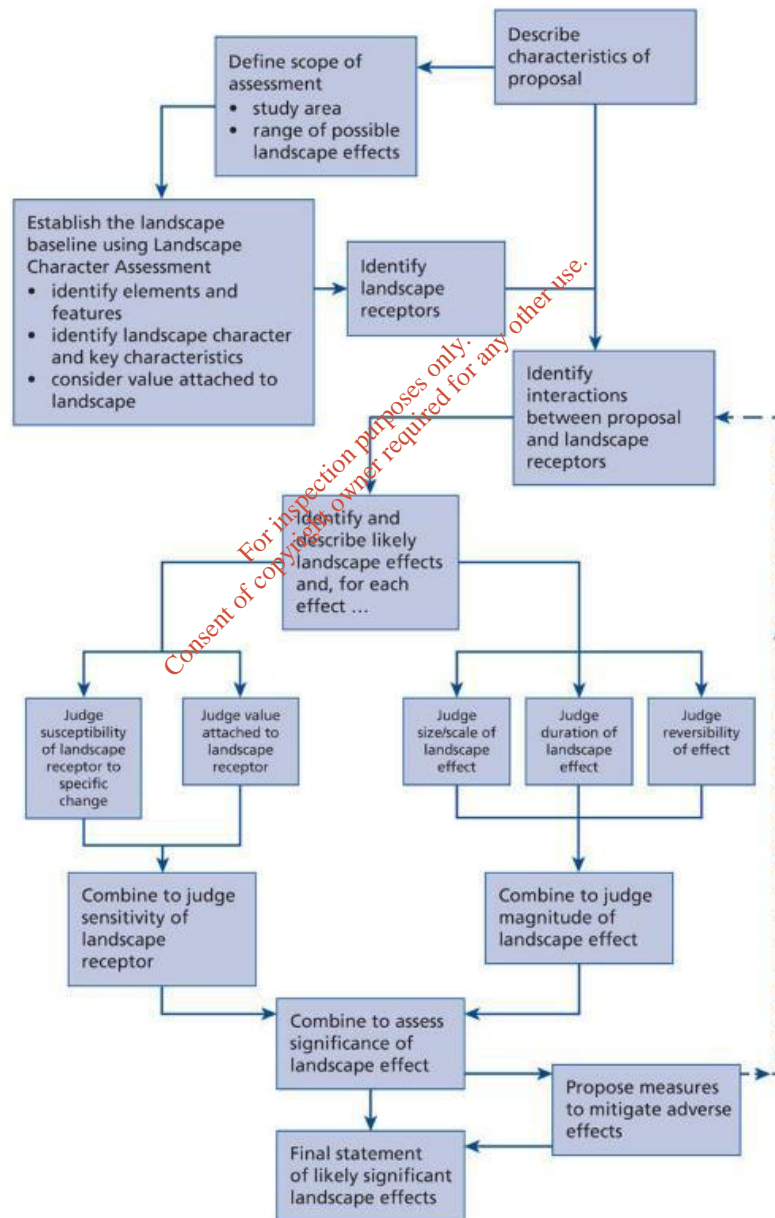


Fig.1.0 Steps in assessing landscape effects

### 1.3 PLANNING POLICY

Meath County Council Development plan 2013-2019 is the statutory plan detailing the development objectives/policies relating to the proposed development. The relevant policies objectives are outlined below;

#### Landscape Impacts

In terms of location, Chapter 14 of this Plan in relation to landscape, identifies protected views, scenic routes and amenity areas in the county. In the assessment of planning applications related to the extractive industry, including restoration / rehabilitation of existing pits, the planning authority will have regard to the policies / objectives for the specific landscape character of the area within which the application site is located.

#### Archaeological Assessment

The Archaeological Code of Practice (Code of Practice between the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Irish Concrete Federation, June 2009) shall be among the guidelines used in the archaeological assessment of all extractive development applications, with best practice adopted in all cases.

#### Extractive Industry Policy

It is the policy of the Council:

*“To ensure that all existing workings are rehabilitated to suitable land uses and that extraction activities allow for future rehabilitation and proper land use management.”*

#### Policies:

- E13. Future authorisations by the local authorities, the EPA and An Bord Pleanála must take account of the scale and availability of existing back filling capacity.
- E14. The local authorities will co-ordinate the future authorisations of backfilling sites in the region to ensure balanced development serves local and regional needs with a preference for large restoration sites ahead of smaller scale sites with shorter life spans. All proposed sites for backfilling activities must comply with environmental protection criteria set out in the plan.

In the face of increased demand for backfilling authorisations there is a need for better coordination between local authorities in the region. This is to ensure facilities are planned and developed at suitable sites and do not present a risk to European designated sites and existing biodiversity and habitats. It is recommended that the lead authority liaise with relevant stakeholders (including the EPA and the DAHG) to ensure appropriate measures are in place for the control and spread of invasive alien species at backfilling sites in the region where necessary.

### 1.3.1 Meath County Development Plan 2013 -2019

Under the Meath County Development Plan (CDP), the County has been divided into 4 Landscape Character Types (LCT) – River Corridors & Estuaries; Lowland Landscapes; Hills & Upland Areas and Coastal Landscapes.

The County is further subdivided into 20 Landscape Character Areas (LCA), see Figure 11.1. The demarcation on the CDP maps places the application site between the LCT Lowland Landscapes and Hills & Upland Areas, namely Lowlands (LCA6) and Tara Skryne Hills (LCA12).

The landscape characteristics for the lands adjoining the application is derived from the topography, agricultural land use and archaeological heritage.

#### 1.3.1.1 LCA6 Central Lowlands.

The Central lowlands is described as composed of rolling drumlins interspaced with numerous large estates and associated parklands. Views within this are generally limited by the complex topography.

The Central Lowlands have the following values.

- Landscape Value of : High
- Landscape Sensitivity: Medium
- Landscape Importance: Regional

#### 1.3.1.2 LCA12 Tara Skryne Hills.

The landscape is comprised of broad rolling hills separated by a mixture of well managed small and large fields which are enclosed by thick thorn hedgerows and mature trees (ash, beech and oak). The Hill of Tara is an area of raised upland to the south of Navan. This is immediately adjacent to the Existing N3 and M3.

The Tara Skryne Hills have the following values

- Landscape value of : Exceptional
- Landscape sensitivity : High
- Landscape Importance : National/International

### 1.4 AUTHOR

The assessment, including site work and completion of drawings, was carried out by Sean Boyle Architect *M.I.I.A.S F.A.S.I F.G.I.S. EurGeo Reg. No.2251.*

## 2.0 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

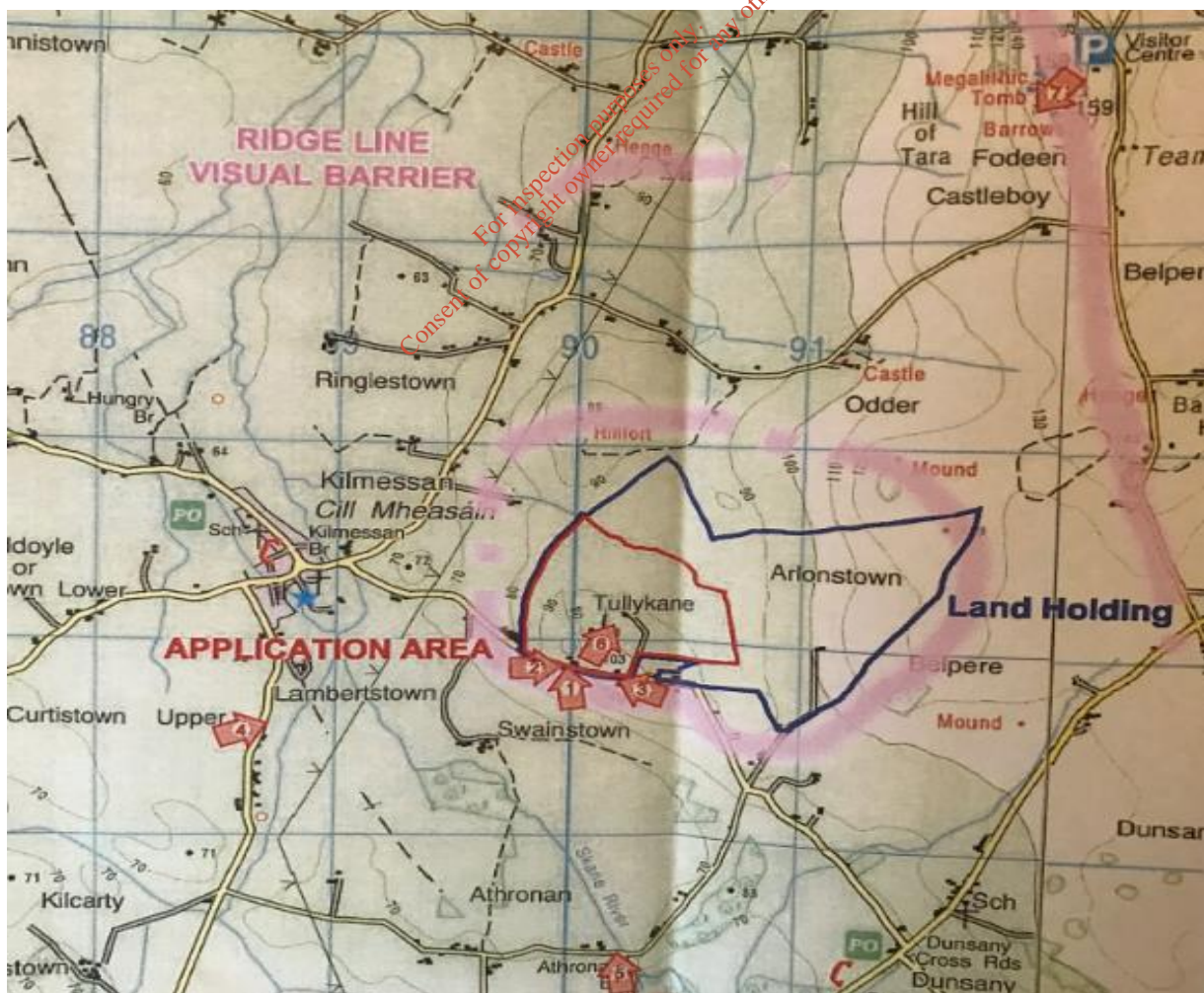
### 2.1 BASELINE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The aim of the visual baseline is to 'establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points' (GLVIA 3rd Edition, P32 Paragraph 3.15). Also, where possible the approximate or relative number of different groups of people who will be affected.

Refer to Photographs (Plates) 1- 12 Shows various views from the road boundary and from the quarry and View Points as shown on the View Point map Attached.

*'Two-dimensional photographic images and photomontages alone cannot capture or reflect the complexity underlying the visual experience, and should therefore be considered an approximation of the three-dimensional visual experiences that an observer would receive in the field'.*

Figure 2.0 below is a map representing the specific photograph locations which have been deemed specifically to be of interest in terms of whether the site is visible from specific areas surrounding the site:



The key location points are listed in table 1.0 below:

Location	Location Description	Plate No.
1	Splayed entrance to Quarry	2
2	Entrance view westwards towards Kilmessan Village	4
3	View from Entrance Eastwards towards Dunsany	3
4	Visual representation of site as seen from Lambertstown	5
5	View of Site from Athronan Bridge Dunsany	6
6	View towards Hill of Tara from Elevated position at site	
7	View from Hill of Tara towards Site at Tullykane	

**Table 1.0: Key location points**



**Plate 1 - Overhead view of the existing Quarry (Google Maps2016)**





**Plate 2 – Location 1 Splayed entrance to Quarry**



**Plate 3: Location No 3 View from Entrance Eastwards towards Dunsany**



**Plate 4: Location No 2 View From Entrance westwards towards Kilmessan Village**

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**Plate No. 5: Location No. 4 Visual representation of site as seen from Lambertstown**



**Plate No. 6: Location No. 5 View of Site from Athronan Bridge Dunsany**



**Plate No 7: Location No 6 View towards Hill of Tara from Elevated position at site**



Plate No 8: Location No 7 View from Hill of Tara towards Site at Tullykane



Plate No.9: View inside site looking Southwards towards existing Entrance and Public Road L2206



**Plate No 10: Internal Haul Route with visible screening mounds**



**Plate No 11: View inside quarry looking eastwards to Dunsany.**



**Plate No 12: View of existing Quarry Operations**

### 2.1.1 STUDY AREA

A study area site between the LCT Lowland Landscapes and Hills & Upland Areas, namely the Central Lowlands (LCA6) and Tara Skryne Hills (LCA12) was taken for the Landscape & Visual assessment section of the Landscape Character Areas (LCA), in the Meath CDP.

### 2.1.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019
- Ordnance Survey Mapping
- Topographical Survey
- Site and Field Inspection

### 2.1.3 Field Monitoring and Inspection

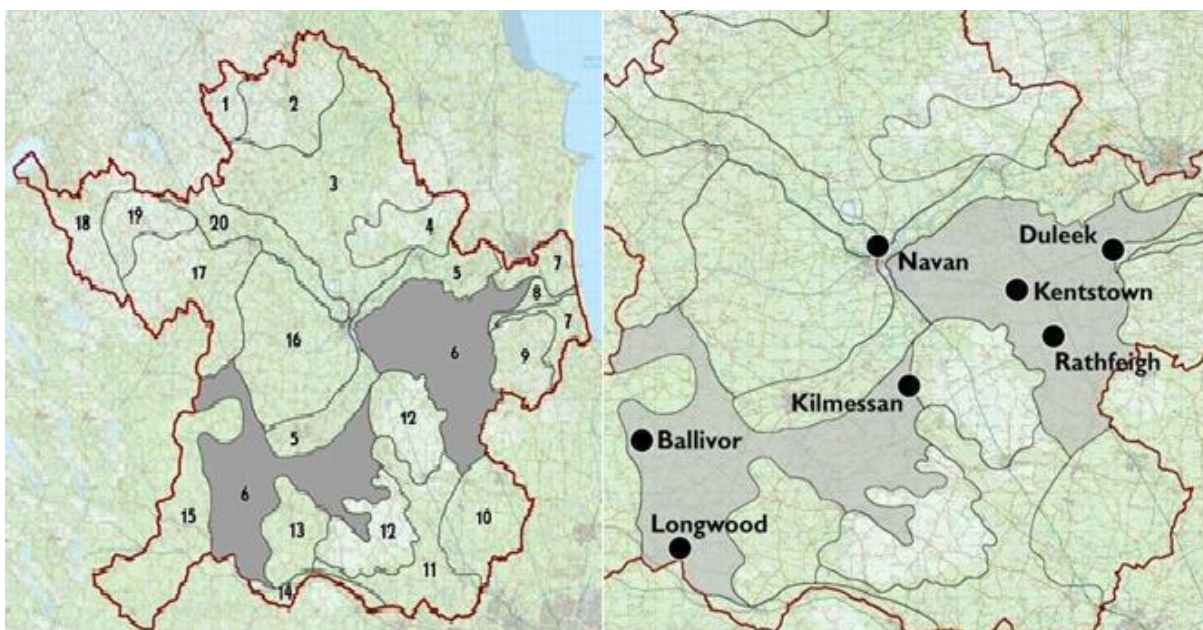
A detailed site survey was undertaken on August 2016 & December 2016. The visibility assessment was recorded from public road at the same time.



## 2.2 Landscape Baseline

County Development Plan provides a landscape character assessment. This divides the county into 20 landscape character types with the planning applications site located in *High Sensitivity Landscapes* “ places the application site between the LCT Lowland Landscapes and Hills & Upland Areas, namely the Central Lowlands (LCA6) and Tara Skryne Hills (LCA12).”

### 2.2.1 LCA6 Central Lowlands



Landscape designations for this area has been detailed as follows:

*Landscape Value: High*

*Landscape Sensitivity: Medium*

*Landscape Importance: Regional*

#### 2.2.1.1 Landscape Description:

Large lowland landscape area composed of rolling drumlins interspersed with numerous large estates and associated parkland. Thick wooded hedgerows, with some conifer plantations, and shelterbelts of ash and larch, separate medium to large fields. Deep roadside drainage ditches and banked hedgerows are a common feature of the landscape in the enclosed rural road corridors. The main transport routes are those radiating from Trim including the R154 to Athboy – Dunboyne, R156 Ballivor- Dunboyne and the R160 to Longwood.

This area of western lowland is less populated and the built fabric consists of scattered dwellings, with concentrations of residential dwellings present adjacent to arterial routes within the vicinity of larger villages such as Longwood and Ballivor, which have expanded significantly and inappropriately due to development pressure.

The landscape character around settlements tends to be a well-managed patchwork of small pastoral fields, dense hedgerows and small areas of broadleaved woodland particularly in the Kildalkey environs where there are estate landscapes with large mature parkland trees. The landscape is predominantly rolling pastureland, although the landscape surrounding Castlerickard has greater diversity than elsewhere in the lowlands with estate landscape, large conifer plantations, and birch woodland around the Boyne river corridor.

In more remote areas, away from settlements, single-track roads wind through less well-managed farmland with rough pasture, overgrown hedgerows and less woodland. Farmland is a variety of scales with square– rectangular fields divided by hedgerows, which are usually clipped to eye-level adjacent to road corridors but are less well managed away from roads. The agricultural landscape comprises a series of small farms rather than few large ones.

Views within this area are generally limited by the complex topography and mature vegetation except at the tops of drumlins where panoramic views are available particularly of the Hill of Tara uplands and Skryne Church. Donore village is critical to the setting of Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site and as such any development in Donore would need to be considered carefully. There is a small cement works outside Kildalkey but the rolling topography limits its visual impact. Short-range views are channelled along narrow valleys between drumlins and often along road or river corridors.



## 2.2.1.2 Key Landscape Characteristics

### 2.2.1.2.1 Geology and Soils

Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement. The central lowlands have a diverse geological make up with the north east comprising of shaly limestone and sandstone and micaceous and pebbly sandstone. The rest of the lowlands formed from calc limestone.

In the north east of the central lowlands deep and shallow well-drained soils have been developed for agriculture with estate landscapes more prevalent. In the south west a mixture of well drained soils and peaty soil have created a more diverse landscape with areas of fertile agricultural land interspersed with conifer plantations and birch woodland.

Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime with wetter species such as alder, birch, and willow present adjacent to the Royal Canal.

### 2.2.1.2.2 Land use

Mix of small - medium rough pasture fields.

Beech stands and rows of beech and pine.

Sand & gravel quarries southwest of Hill of Down and near Kilmessan.

### 2.2.1.2.3 Ecology and Habitat

3 proposed National Heritage Areas (PNHA's)

- Duleek Commons – Is a level drained marsh northwest of Duleek.
- Thomastown Bog – 3km west of Duleek this raised bog surrounded by wet woodland and grassland.
- Balrath Woods – Narrow strips of woodland adjacent to N2 and L125.
- Cromwells Bush Fen – Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Painstown Quarry - Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Cruicrath Quarry - Former Area of Scientific Interest (ASI)
- Strong network of well-wooded hedgerows in most parts.
- Range of mature broadleaf copses and rows of pines. Some wetland habitat and wet pasture adjacent to Royal Canal.
- Boyne River Corridor and Stoneyford River are important due to the variety of habitats associated with the rivers.

### 2.2.1.2.4 History and Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Royal Canal
- Estate landscapes.
- Buried archaeology but few upstanding historical features.
- Duleek has an historic core with several buildings and artefacts.

#### 2.2.1.2.5 Tourism

- Royal Canal is a popular recreational boating route from Dublin to Mullingar.
- Designated walks which branch off the existing Royal Canal Way and provide links to other tourist attractions/heritage towns would be a valuable addition.
- Summerville Demesne at Kentstown has some tourist facilities and potential to develop further attractions.

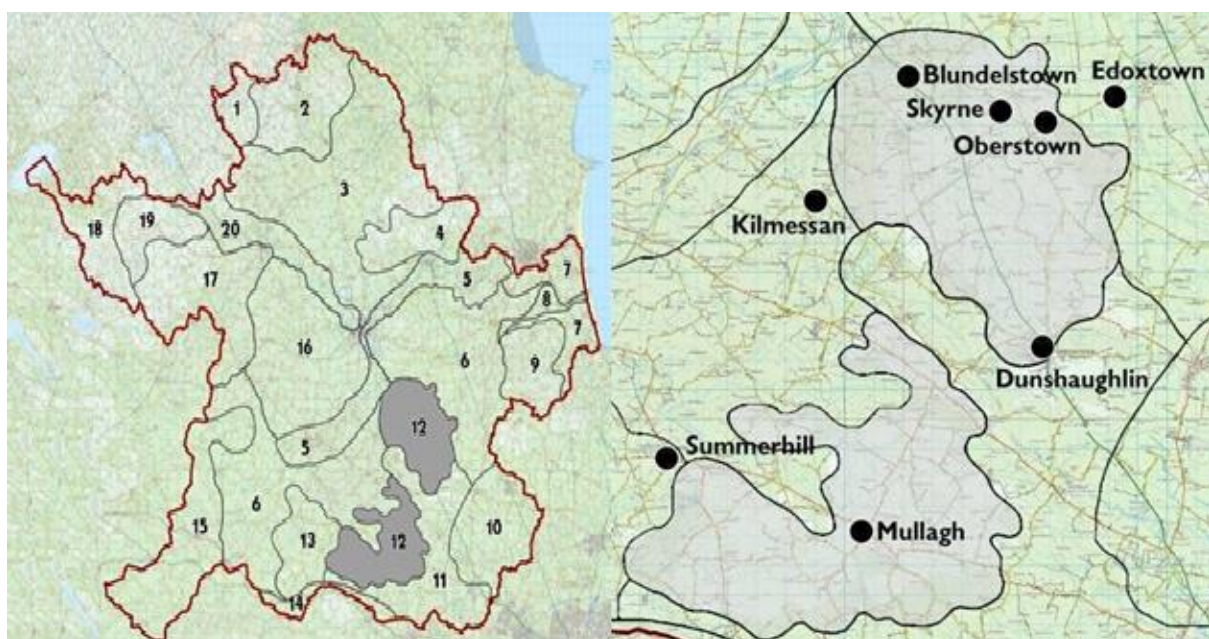
#### 2.2.1.2.6 Settlements and Built Structures

- Longwood is the main settlement. Settlement type predominantly small villages with several medium to large villages.
- Settlements have most vernacular buildings. Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with concentrations of modern built development adjacent to Clonard.

#### 2.2.1.2.7 Description of key settlements

- Longwood: Large village with small-scale attractive centre, although through traffic is considerable. No new development in centre but large housing developments on the outskirts.
- Duleek: Small town with attractive village green. Mix of new development on the urban fringe is unsympathetic to the attractive location.
- Kildalkey: Small village that has developed significantly in recent years. No real hub to the village, however surrounding landscape is attractive.
- Castlerikard: Small attractive village with castle ruins and church overlooking river. Relatively unspoilt in terms of built environment.

#### 2.2.2 LCA 12 Tara / Skyrne Hills



### 2.2.2.1 Landscape Description

The Hill of Tara is an area of raised upland to the south of Navan. It is immediately adjacent to the N3 national primary route, which links Navan to Dunshaughlin to the east of the Hill of Tara. The landscape comprises broad rolling hills, separated by a mixture of well-managed small and large fields, which are enclosed by thick thorn hedgerows and mature trees (ash, beech and oak.)

The upland aspect of the Hill of Tara provides panoramic views over the landscape, where the wealth of heritage within this part of Meath can be clearly seen. Skryne Church is a prominent landmark to the east. There are also a large number of raths located throughout the rolling drumlin landscape. The upland landscape is open in the character but the lowlands are well-wooded and enclosed. This is particularly the case for rural road corridors and the existing N3 road, which has minimal visual impact on the Hill of Tara.

Overall this LCA is well managed and has high scenic value, although it is in poorer condition in the Kilmessan environs and to the north of Dunshaughlin.

Kilmessan is a large heritage village to the north east of the Hill of Tara within close proximity of the N3. The built fabric of the village is disjointed in both style and scale: both new residential and office units have been developed rapidly in recent years and are at odds with the scale and architectural character of the village. Pressure for further development will be significant, due to the towns' proximity to the N3 and proposed M3. Therefore it is vital that careful consideration is given to all future development to avoid expansion of the village in an unsympathetic manner.

Dunshaughlin is a large town located to the south of the Hill of Tara. The N3 national primary route runs through the town and continuing pressure from the Dublin metropolitan area has led to Dunshaughlin developing as a commuter town. The main street of Dunshaughlin has few buildings of merit considering the size of the town and much of the built environment has developed over the last 30 years. There are many large housing developments on the edge of town. Some have been successfully integrated into the fabric of the town, although in general the scale and style has created a monotony of residential developments.

Land use is predominantly pasture with small concentrations of arable land in both the uplands and lowlands. There are some small copses within the area but commercial forestry is not present. The rich archaeological heritage of this area, has to some extent constrained development apart from the recent updating of transport infrastructure.

The proposed M3 motorway is the singular most important transport infrastructure development to be built in Meath in recent years and it will dramatically change the volume of car traffic and travel times throughout the county. The impact it will have on the landscape will be considerable, as the new road will be significantly larger than the existing N3 national primary road.

This LCA is of National/International Importance. At present it does not meet the full criteria for International Importance (page 4) but it does have sufficient landscape heritage merit to warrant its promotion as an international attraction and an application for an international designation by UNESCO.

## 2.2.2.2 Key Characteristics

### 2.2.2.2.1 Geology and Soils

- Complex drumlin landform created by glacial movement.
- Limestone is overlain by a variety of rocks and soils – boulder clay, kames and eskers - most of which have been deposited by melting glaciers.
- Comprised of shales with interbedded limestone, conglomeratic limestone and calp limestone forming deep and shallow free draining acidic soils.
- Ground conditions suit those trees that thrive in free draining soil such as beech, oak, ash and lime.

### 2.2.2.2.2 Land Use

- Mix of small – medium pasture fields.
- Well-wooded hedgerows with mature trees.
- N3 National primary route from Navan - Dunshaughlin.

### 2.2.2.2.3 Ecology and Habitat

- No designations.
- Strong network of hedgerows.
- Many mature trees and broadleaf copses.
- Well-managed agricultural farmland.

### 2.2.2.2.4 History and Culture

- Long established mixed scale farmland.
- Estate landscapes.
- Hill of Tara, site of the home of the ancient High Kings of Ireland and giving the title 'Royal County' to Meath.
- St Columba's Church ruins, with visual link to Tara, is the site of the place chosen for safekeeping the Saint's shrine during the C11th, Augustinian abbey was founded later although the ruins are those of the parish Church built in the C15th.
- Skryne Hill and church is a mediaeval tower ('the lands of Skryne were granted by Hugh de Lacy to Adam de Fergo who in 1172 held a motte and castle here')
- Railway architecture / bridges
- Lismullen, Corbalton Hall
- Kileen Castle, started 1180 by Hugh de Lacy now in ruins.

### 2.2.2.2.5 Tourism

- Hill of Tara is one of the main heritage tourist attractions in County Meath and Ireland and provides panoramic views over the lowlands.
- The Hill of Tara is linked to the Tain Trail heritage trail.
- Skryne Church is important landmark and provides panoramic views towards the Hill of Tara.

#### 2.2.2.2.6 Settlements and Built Structures

- Kilmessan (see description of key settlements).
- Settlement type is predominantly small villages/ graigs including Edoxtown, Oberstown and Skryne which are all relatively intact and unspoilt.
- Built development in countryside consists of individual dwellings, generally modern rather than traditional buildings with a large concentration of modern development adjacent to Kilmessan.

#### 2.2.2.3 Description of the Key Settlements

- Dunshaughlin: Medium sized town that has developed rapidly in recent years due to close proximity to Dublin Metropolitan Area and M3. Lack of vernacular buildings in town. Modern development throughout town particularly on edges.
- Kilmessan: Small town which has developed rapidly in recent years. Lack of local vernacular. Modern development throughout town with concentrations on outskirts.

#### Forces of Change

- The proposed M3 motorway will dramatically change the scale of road infrastructure and the interchange at Dunshaughlin may have knock-on effects for development in this LCA.
- Significant residential development in Kilmessan has significantly increased the scale and eroded the character of the village.

Recommendations for the Landscape designated site LCA12 Tara / Skryne Hills within the County Development are very relevant for the proposed development. In particular recommendations 2,3 and 4 which bear relevance to the proposed development and to future landscape impacts on the designated landscape:

#### Recommendations

1. Submit an application to UNESCO for an International Designation. Once this has been lodged, there is a strong case for treating the site as a 'Potential Site of International Importance' and putting in place policies that will afford it protection in keeping with this status. In our opinion the Hill of Tara is worthy of an application on the basis of its rarity, scale, age and undoubted importance in Irish history. The Hill of Tara already attracts a significant number of international visitors.
2. Preserve the landscape around the Hills of Tara and Skryne as part of a nationally/internationally culturally important landscape including conservation of the setting of both hills due to their prominence within the wider landscape and

- panoramic nature of views afforded from them.
3. Protect and maintain the wooded character at the base of both hills as a buffer to development in adjacent lowland areas and as an integral part of the character of the hilltops.
  4. Develop design guidance for landscape treatment and architectural design of new development with particular reference to transport routes and existing settlements of Summerhill, Kilmessan and Dunshaughlin.
  5. Preserve Skryne church as a landmark within the wider lowland landscape.
  6. Seek to consolidate existing settlements by locating new development within urban areas rather than as one-off developments within rural areas.
  7. Improve directional signage for the Hill of Tara from the N3 and other secondary transport routes.

Particular cognisance must be paid to the proposed site and the impacts that the site may have in relation to the Hills of Tara and Skryne.

### 2.2.3 Outdoor Recreational Facilities within the study area.

A New Public Amenity Park is proposed next to the proposed recovery area in the Quarry. (Please see figure 2.0 below)



**Fig 3.0: Proposed New Public Amenity Park**

The park will have amongst other elements, a sports field, a walkway (1.2km approx.), a car park, a children's playground, a sensory area, all constructed with a view towards giving back to the local

area and giving the local community something that has been identified in the County Development Plan as a requirement for the village of Kilmessan.

This park will have a separate entrance approximately 200m south of the main access to the quarry and will again not be visible from the local roadway L2206. In relation to the houses. Through the process of public consultation the neighbours intimated that they would not be comfortable for the site to be visible from their back gardens and so a screening plan has been suggested which will prevent the site from being visible to the nearest sensitive visual receptors.

#### 2.2.4 Site Specific Landscape Appraisal

The application site and existing quarry are located within a rural landscape. The predominant land use in the surrounding area is agricultural, principally pasture and tillage with limited forestry. In the immediate vicinity of the application site however, mineral extraction activities constitute a locally significant land use. Although extraction activities have been significantly reduced at the site due to the current economic climate, it has planning permission to continue well into future. (10 Years from now)

There are a number of residences in the area immediately surrounding the existing facility. There is a residence immediately west of the application site, another at the north-west corner of the site, three around the north-east corner of the site and one to the south of the site.

The Quarry site is bounded to the South by the L2206 local road which functions as an 80kph county road within Meath County Council's road hierarchy. Along the length of the L2206 vehicular access is provided to individual residential properties, farm holdings and agricultural farmlands with all of these access points taking the form of simple gated agricultural access points or simple priority 'T' junction arrangements. The sloping topography, in conjunction with the tree lined hedgerows has the potential to accommodate the proposed development.

### 2.3 Visual Baseline

#### 2.3.1 General Visibility

The visibility of the application site was assessed by a desktop study of OSI Maps, available aerial photography & detailed site survey. Views of the site from locations to the north, south, east & west are limited due to the topography of the land and dense vegetation to the boundaries. A photographic survey of the visual impact of the proposed development on the adjoining area was undertaken to confirm the findings of the Landscape Assessment as described above. Figure 2.0, shows the locations of the seven photographs and indicates the significant visual barriers that help to screen the development site from outside public views. Please refer to each plate, which are annotated accordingly.

There are no direct views into the site from adjoining public roads due to the existing visual screening mounds strategically placed around the quarry. Photographs taken at locations 1, 2 & 3 along the Public Road L2206 show the improved site entrance and the screening in place around the site. The Layout Plan for the Community Amenity Park shows the Location of the proposed new entrance. (See attached EIS Drawing)

Photographs taken at locations 4 & 5 are further away at Lambertstown townland along the L2206 and at Athronan Bridge near Dunsany, south of Tullykane Quarry. There are no views into

the quarry from these locations. The view from Location 6 is taken from the highest point within the quarry site looking north towards the Hill of Tara. The view from location 7 is taken from the Hill of Tara towards Tullykane Quarry. This photograph successfully highlights the aspect of the quarry with respect to Tara. As can be seen, the quarry is south of Tara and the glare from the sun makes it difficult to pick out the quarry, below the horizon.

### 2.3.2 Visual Receptors

Visual receptors are people living in the area, people who work there, people passing through on road, or other forms of transport, people visiting promoted landscapes or attractions, and people engaged in recreation of different types.

Visual receptors include users of the L2206 who get a glimpse of the site entrance as they pass it and view the temporary overburden stockpile which will be reinstated as part of the restoration process. Private residents adjacent to the Community Amenity Park to west of the Quarry Site may see part of the Community Amenity Park.

The views of the road users along the L2206 are grouped into one visual Receptor Area, as the views from all locations within this area are similar.

Visual Receptor Area No.	Approximate Location / Extent	Types Of Receptor	Nature of Views / Visual Amenity
1	Approximately 400m to the West and East of the entrance	Road Users	Short Distance views towards the site entrance and access road – <b>Medium visual amenity</b>
2	Private Dwelling	People living in the area	Views of temporary overburden stockpile – <b>Medium Visual Amenity</b>

Photography and fieldwork analysis of views of the site were carried out from the surrounding landscape. The object was to determine which locations offer the clearest views of the application site and/or are most accessible to the public and to identify representative viewpoints for detailed viewpoint analysis. The existing views from each of these points are briefly described with the aid of photographs.

### 2.4 Difficulties Encountered

No difficulties were encountered in obtaining baseline landscape data and site specific data to conduct the Landscape visual assessment for the proposed development.



## 3.0 Impact Assessment

### 3.1 Evaluation Methodology

As described, the assessment of sensitivity will incorporate judgements about the:

- A. Susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change arising from the specific proposal; and the value attached to the receptor.
- B. Each of the visual effects identified needs to be evaluated in terms of its:
- C. size or scale,
- D. the geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility.

The judgements about the sensitivity and magnitude are supported by a number of pre-defined parameters as described below. Word scales, with ideally three or four categories, are preferred as the means of summarising judgements for each of the contributing criteria.

#### 3.1.1 Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their sensitivity, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape.

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment sensitivity is similar to the concept of landscape sensitivity used in the wider arena of landscape planning, but it is not the same as it is specific to the particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question.

Judgements about the susceptibility of landscape receptors to change should be recorded on a verbal scale (for example high, medium or low), but the basis for this must be clear, and linked back to evidence from the baseline study.

Landscape sensitivity is used to establish the capacity of the landscape to accommodate the type of development proposed and is defined as follows:

Landscape Sensitivity	Definition
High	Highest/Very Attractive landscape quality with highly valued or unique characteristics susceptible to relatively small changes.
Medium	Good landscape quality with moderately valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes
Low	Ordinary/Poor landscape quality with common characteristics capable of absorbing substantial change.

### 3.1.2 Susceptibility to change

This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/ or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

### 3.1.3 Viewpoint Sensitivity

Judgements about the susceptibility of visual receptors to change should be recorded on a verbal scale (high, medium or low) linked back to evidence from the baseline study.

Susceptibility	Visual Receptor Type
High	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 focused 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
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or any other means of transport
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; people at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasions be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life)

### 3.1.4 Magnitude of Landscape Resource Change

The magnitude of effects, made up of judgements about:

- A. the size and scale of the effect — for element of the example whether there is complete loss of a particular landscape or a minor change;

- B. the geographical extent of the area that will be affected the duration of the effect and its reversibility.
- C. Judging the magnitude of the visual effects identified needs to take account of:
  - D. the scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
  - E. the degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture;
  - F. The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpse.

The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect:

- I. the angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- II. the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- III. the extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

The overall magnitude of the landscape/visual effects is summarised on a scale of

- i. 'high negative',
- ii. 'medium negative',
- iii. 'low negative',
- iv. 'negligible',
- v. 'high positive',
- vi. 'medium positive' or
- vii. 'low positive',

based on professional interpretation of the findings.

Magnitude	Description of Effect
High Negative	Total loss or large scale damage to existing character or distinctive features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements
Medium Negative	Partial loss or noticeable damage to existing character or distinctive features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements
Low Negative	Slight loss or noticeable damage to existing character or distinctive features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements
Negligible	No noticeable loss, damage or alteration to character or features or elements
Low Positive	Slight improvement of character by the restoration of existing features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic features and elements, or by the addition of new characteristic elements
Medium Positive	Partial or noticeable improvement of character by the restoration of existing features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic and noticeable features and elements, or by the addition of new characteristic features.
High Positive	Large scale improvement of character by the restoration of features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic and conspicuous features and elements, or by the addition of new distinctive feature

### 3.1.5 Significance of Landscape Impacts

Significance	Definition
<b>Major</b>	Be at considerable variance with the character of the landscape.
<b>(Negative)</b>	Degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements.  Damage the sense of place or local distinctiveness of an area.
<b>Moderate/Major</b>	Are likely to cause effects that meet some of the criteria from the above and below
<b>(Negative)</b>	categories
<b>Moderate</b>	Conflict with the character of the landscape.
<b>(Negative)</b>	Have an adverse impact on characteristic features or elements.  Diminish the sense of place or local distinctiveness of an area.
<b>Minor/Moderate</b>	Likely to cause effects that meet the criteria from some of the above and below
<b>(Negative)</b>	categories
<b>Minor</b>	Not quite fit the character of the landscape.
<b>(Negative)</b>	Be at variance with characteristic features and elements.

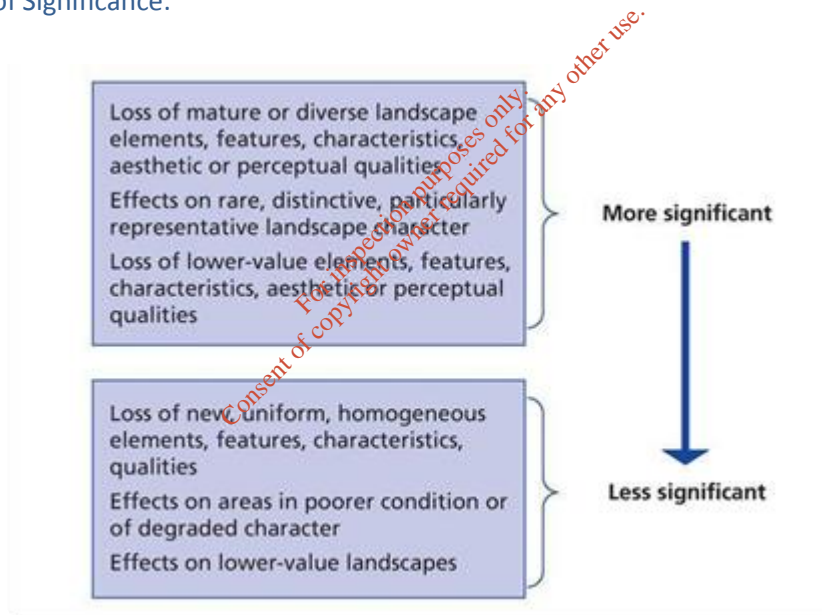
	<p>Detract from the sense of place or local distinctiveness of an area.</p>
<b>Neutral</b>	<p>Maintain the character (including quality and value) of the landscape.</p> <p>Blend in with characteristic features and elements.</p> <p>Enable a sense of place or local distinctiveness to be retained.</p> <p>Change which has balanced positive and negative effects</p>
<b>Minor (Positive)</b>	<p>Complement the character (including quality and value) of the landscape.</p> <p>Maintain or enhance characteristic features and elements.</p> <p>Enable some sense of place or local distinctiveness to be restored.</p> <p>Enable some restoration of established characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.</p>
<b>Minor/Moderate (Positive)</b>	<p>Likely to cause effects that meet the criteria from some of the above and below categories</p>
<b>Moderate (Positive)</b>	<p>Improve the character of the landscape.</p> <p>Enable the creation, repair, conservation or restoration of characteristic features and elements partially lost or diminished as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development.</p> <p>Enable a sense of place or local distinctiveness to be restored.</p> <p>Enable good creation, repair, conservation or restoration of valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.</p>
<b>Moderate/Major (Positive)</b>	<p>Are likely to cause effects that meet some of the criteria from the above and below categories</p>
<b>Major (Positive)</b>	<p>Enhance the character of the landscape.</p> <p>Enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements lost as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development.</p> <p>Enable a sense of place or local distinctiveness to be enhanced.</p> <p>Enable significant creation, repair, conservation or restoration of valued characteristic features partially lost through other land uses.</p>

The level of significance of impact on landscape character is a product of landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of change in landscape resource as indicated below:

Magnitude of landscape resource change	Landscape Sensitivity		
	Low	Medium	High
High Negative	Neutral	Minor (Negative)	Minor/Moderate (Negative)
Medium Negative	Minor (Positive)	Neutral	Minor (Negative)
Low Negative	Minor/Moderate (Positive)	Minor (Positive)	Neutral
Negligible	Moderate (Positive)	Minor/Moderate (Positive)	Minor (Positive)
Low Positive	Moderate/Major (Positive)	Moderate (Positive)	Minor/Moderate (Positive)
Medium Positive	Major (Positive)	Moderate/Major (Positive)	Moderate (Positive)
High Positive	Major (Positive)	Major (Positive)	Moderate/Major (Positive)

Principles of Assessing Significance of Landscape and Visual Impacts

3.1.5.1 Scale of Significance:



3.2 Landscape Impact

3.2.1 Landscape Effects

The main landscape effects that will take place due to the proposed development will be the changes to the landform within the fill area, removal of the temporary stockpiles of overburden & additional hedgerow/trees. This will result in the creation of agricultural land in keeping with the surrounding landscape and profiled, levelled and finished off to integrate seamlessly with the local area. There will also be the creation of a new landscape feature through the development the proposed Public Amenity Park.

### 3.2.2 Landscape Sensitivity

The site is located in an area of *High Sensitivity - Landscapes “the Central Lowlands (LCA6) and Tara Skryne Hills (LCA12)”*, as part of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment.

The application site is made up from extracted ground, with the exception of stockpiling to the perimeter of the extracted area. No major landscape elements will be affected by the proposed development, with the development, in fact, having a positive effect on the surrounding landscape.

There are number of scenic routes listed in the vicinity of the area, but, resulting from existing mature tree lined hedgerows & the surrounding landscape topography, the views of the proposed site are minimal from these routes.

On balance, the assessment made in the Meath Landscape Character Assessment, and the location of the site within a previously extracted Quarry Site, the sensitivity of *Tara Skane Valley* to the proposed development is assessed as MEDIUM. The sensitivity of individual landscape elements of the works is assessed as MEDIUM, as the proposed development will restore the lands to their original form & topography and provide a Community Amenity Park on existing lands to the west of the proposed restoration site which will have a positive impact on the landscape form.

### 3.2.3 Magnitude of Change to the landscape

See table 3.0 below describing size & scale, geographical extent & duration/reversibility of the identified landscape effects, and resulting judgement of their overall magnitude:

Parameter	Description
<b>Size &amp; Scale</b>	<p>An area of approximately 51.44 hectares will be restored to its original landform &amp; agricultural use, using imported inert material &amp; existing overburden stored on site.</p> <p>The overall scale of the landscape will not be affected by the proposed development, as all works are contained within an existing quarry. The Site also proposes a Community Amenity Park next the Quarry.</p> <p>The key characteristics of the landscape surrounding the site will be positively affected by the proposal as the lands will be restored to sloping agricultural lands.</p>
<b>Geographical Extent</b>	The effects will be experienced at site level only (within the development itself)
<b>Duration/Reversibility</b>	<p>The duration is considered long term as the impact on the landform will be permanent.</p> <p>The proposed development will reverse the impact of the previous extraction of the lands which is taken place, by reinstating the lands to the original landform.</p>
<b>Overall Magnitude</b>	<p>The changes due to the proposed development will have a positive effect on overall landscape character.</p> <p>The overall magnitude of the landscape effect, due to the proposed development is assessed as <b>MEDIUM POSITIVE</b></p>

### 3.2.4 Significance of the Landscape Impact

The sensitivity of the Tara-Skane Valley Area affected by the proposed development is assessed as MEDIUM. Combining this with the MEDIUM POSITIVE magnitude of the landscape effects results in a **MODERATE/MAJOR (POSITIVE)** level of landscape impact

The sensitivity of the individual landscape elements affected by the proposed development is assessed as MEDIUM. Combining this with the MEDIUM POSITIVE magnitude of the landscape effects results in a **MODERATE/MAJOR (POSITIVE)** level of landscape impact.

### 3.3 Visual Impacts

#### 3.3.1 Visual Effects

The visual effects that will take place due to the proposed development will be the visibility of lorries accessing the entrance from the L2206. Due to the dense Vegetation and Existing Screen Mounds around the boundary, no on site activities will be visible from publicly accessible areas to the proposed restoration area or the Public Amenity Park.

#### 3.3.2 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

The effect in terms of sensitivity is made up of judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of change arising from the specific proposal and the value attached to the receptor;

Visual Receptor Area No.	Susceptibility	Value	Overall Sensitivity
1	Medium -	Views to and from Kilmessan and Views of Skane Valley and on the CR474 and adjoining Roads (LCA6) Views to and from The Hill of Tara and Tara Skryne Hills and on the CR474 and adjoining roads	MEDIUM
2	Medium – Private dwelling	No protected view	MEDIUM

#### 3.3.3 Magnitude of Change to Viewpoints

The magnitude is made up of judgements about:

- (i) The size and scale of the effect:
- (ii) The geographical extent of the area that will be affected and the duration of the effect and
- (iii) Its' reversibility.



Visual Receptor Area No.	Description of Magnitude of Change	Overall Magnitude
1	<p><b>Size and scale of the effect</b></p> <p>Elements of the proposed development visible in views from the visual receptor area will only be lorries accessing the site from L2206.</p> <p>Due to the dense vegetation to the L2206 boundary, no on site activities will be visible from publicly accessible areas.</p> <p>Views by road users are limited to the time it takes to pass the site entrance.</p> <p><b>Geographical extent of the area that will be affected</b></p> <p>Users of the L2206 who get a glimpse of the site entrance as they pass it &amp; view the temporary overburden stockpile which will be reinstated as part of the restoration process.</p> <p>Views of the road users along the L2206 from all locations within this area are similar.</p> <p><b>Duration of the effect and its reversibility</b></p> <p>It is expected to take c14 years to complete the restoration process, which means the visual effects will be temporary &amp; there will be no lasting visual effects on completion</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p> <p>POSITIVE</p>

### 3.3.4 Significance of Visual Impact

Based on the sensitivity of the visual receptors (medium) combined with the magnitude of the visual effects (medium positive), the significance of visual effects is assessed as Moderate/Major (Positive).

The Landscape Assessment, Line of Sight Assessment and the Photographic Survey clearly demonstrate that there will be no impact on the surrounding landscape, road network and hence the residential amenity associated with it. The topography of the immediate area acts as an

effective natural screen, so much so that the continued development of the site will not impact at all on the surrounding landscape.

It is proposed to extend the quarry operations within the existing approved quarry extraction footprint, this will take place below the surrounding ground level over a 20 year period, grass seeded soil mounds are already in place to screen the development.

The upper sections of the southern quarry faces and banks are visible from Tara, but only form a small portion of the all-round vista from Tara. The rock being quarried is dark, resulting in unobtrusive features (compared to a white limestone for example). The quarry is not seen against the skyline with Ringlestown Rath forming a more prominent focus feature when viewing from Tara.

Large sections of the southern quarry face have been covered with subsoil and will 'green-up' with time. The main access road down into the quarry is visible from Tara, but is no different than any road that can be seen from this vantage point and can't be considered a significant impact.

With binoculars it can be determined that the current working floor of the quarry is not visible from the Hill of Tara. This will not change over time as extraction has advanced to its limit both north and south in the quarry and the northern screening mound will remain in place for the duration of development. The Proposed back fill restoration scheme allows for the quarry void to fill with inert soil and stone. Since the watertable is below the existing quarry floor it can be concluded that the works will not be visible from Tara at all. There will be no significant impact from the Proposed Back Fill and Community Park at Tullykane either during the Intake of materials or Final Restoration to Agriculture.

### 3.4 Impacts on Landscape/Planning Designations

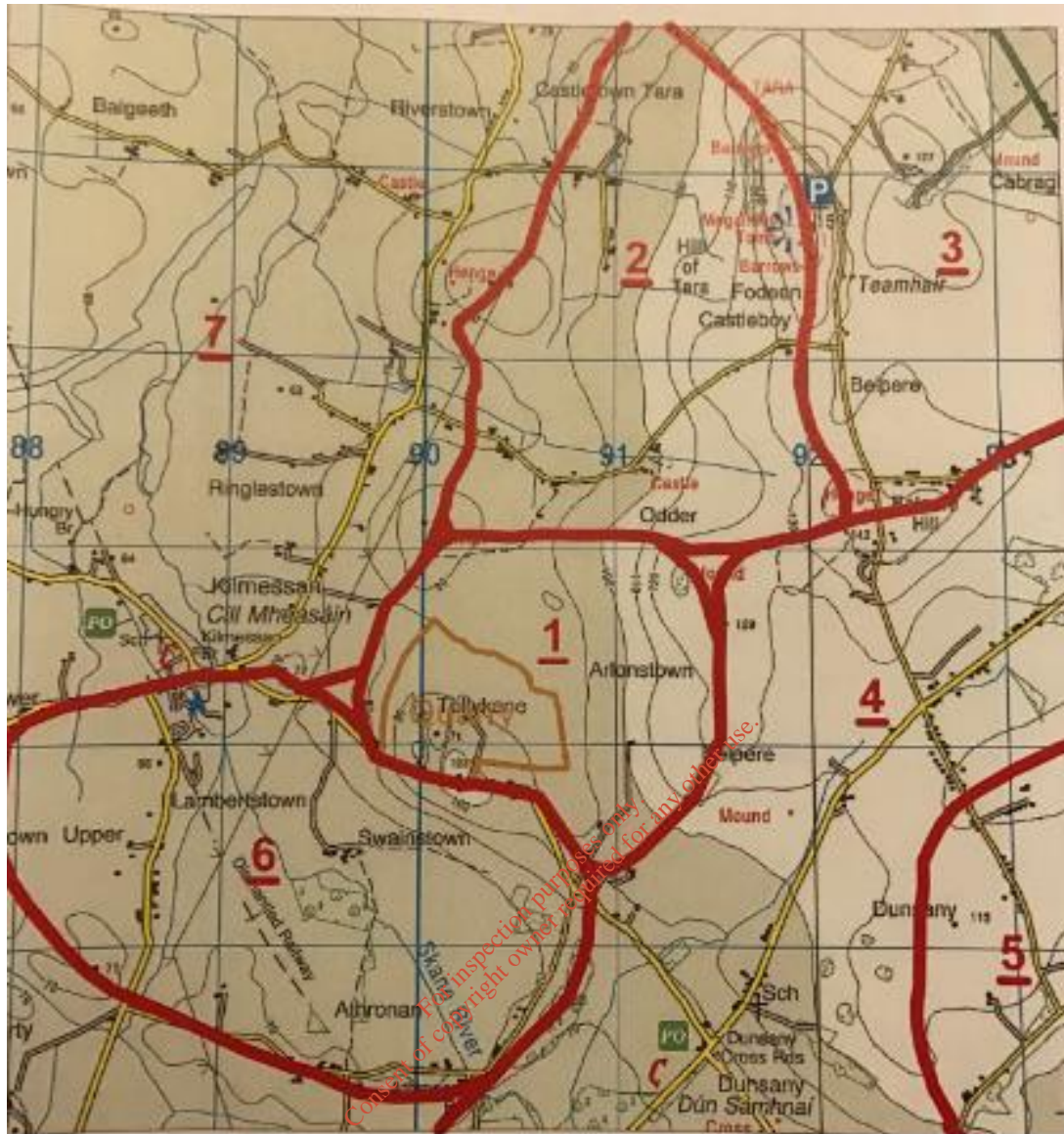
#### 3.4.1 Extractive Industry Policy

The proposed development will result in the restoration of the existing quarry to agricultural use which is in line with Extractive Industry Policy of Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. As part of the existing planning permission 99/1230, the permission allows for the quarry to be re- instated after use to a lake. This will not however be the case in the proposed development.

#### 3.4.2 Scenic Routes and Protected Views

The proposed development will not be visible from any of the described views along scenic routes due to existing mature vegetation & the topography of the lands, and will therefore not have any visual impact on this designation.

Within this landscape are a number of visual units that are contained by the landforms and landcover of the area, these units have been delineated on the attached fig 4.0 below. A description of the main limiting factors that effect the extent of views within each unit follows below.



1. This is the visual unit that incorporates the development site; it consists of the entire application area and also the entire landholding of the applicant. The visual unit is demarcated by a series of ridgelines above and below the general elevation of the site. To the south the prominent ridgeline of Swainstown/Tullykane Hill, along which the local county road runs, eliminates any views from the south into the quarry. To the east the ridgeline that connects Belper and Odder, located in open countryside is an effective screen to views from the east. With the exception of the Hill of Tara (which is considered in detail below) views into Unit 1 are screened by the ridgeline between Odder and Ringlostown Rath. Whilst to the west, Kilmessan Village and the area beyond it are at a lower elevation, so no views of the quarry within Unit 1 are afforded. The application lands sits on an elevated plateau enclosed on three sides by ridgelines that are effective visual barriers. The land to the west of the unit falls away to lower ground where no views of the quarry are possible.

2. Unit 2 encompasses the uplands area of the western flanks of the Hill of Tara including parts of Odder, Belpere and Castleboy. The land slopes in a westerly direction from a maximum elevation of 159mAOD at Tara to around 60mAOD in the Screen River valley 3km to the west. Unit 2 is to the north of Unit 1, and the quarry is located 3km to the southwest of the Hill of Tara. Intervisibility

between the two units is limited, the upper section of the quarry is visible when standing on the south-western end of the Hill of Tara, whereas the existing quarry floor and working area is not. Existing perimeter screening mounds constructed along the northern boundary of the quarry coupled with intervening vegetation help to limit the visual impact of the quarry on the visual amenity of the Hill of Tara.

3. Unit 3 is the Tara Skryne Valley to the north and east of the Hill of Tara. This unit is not visible from Unit 1 or vice versa, and there will not therefore be any impact on it arising from the existence of the proposed development.

4. This unit comprises a low wide valley of a tributary of the River Skane rising south of Belpere Hill and flowing south to the River Skane at Dunsany Demesne. The unit is dominated by ribbon development along the county roads that run through the landscape and the hamlet of Dunsany with its church, school and post office. Inter-visibility between Units 2 and 1 are very limited because of the ridgeline referred to earlier between Belpere and Odder. The Inter-visibility is further restricted by mature hedgerow and tree stands that break up the landscape into smaller visual units again.

5. Located on the fringe of the study area this unit is similar in character to Unit 4. Killen Castle, currently under developed as a luxury hotel and golf complex dominates this Unit. When completed Killen Castle will be a major recreational amenity for the area. There is no Inter-visibility between Units 1 and 5, so there will be no impact on this Unit and the enterprise at Killen Castle from the continued development of Tullykane Quarry.

Unit 6 is separated from Unit 5 by the northern most extent of Galtrim Moraine, a low wooded ridge of glacial derived sands and gravels. Swainstown House and Demesne dictate the character of this visual unit. The Unit is crossed by overhead power lines and the disused Clonsilla to Navan railway line. The estate parkland occupies the low valley of the Skane River and the southern flanks of Swainstown/Tullykane Hill. The elevation of the majority of the unit is at 70m AOD, which results in Unit 1 and the quarry being totally screened from views because of the higher intervening Swainstown/Tullykane Hill ridge. The low flood plain and wide valley of the Skane River north west of Tullykane Quarry has very limited views into Unit 1 which is situated at a higher elevation. There are no views into the quarry from this Unit. There will be no impact on Unit 7 from the existence of the quarry at Tullykane.

### 3.5 “Do Nothing Scenario”

If the proposed development were not to be carried out, the planning application site would continue open and the extraction would continue until restoration in 15 to 20 years slowly re-colonised with locally occurring grass and scrub species with a deep lake. Visually as per the previous extraction planning permission the landscape would remain at medium impact from the development. The finalised product would be very different and the accumulated potential value of the development in terms of the generation of a public amenity park and approximately 46 hectares of new agricultural land would not materialise.

## 4.0 Mitigation Measures

Measures taken to further minimise the potential visual impacts associated with the existing and proposed development can be classified as; Avoidance mitigation.

The primary measure taken to minimise visual impacts is through their avoidance. It is considered that the existing hedgerows along the site boundary and the surrounding topography, will ensure that the visual impact of the development is not significant.

The following landscape mitigation measures should be put in place to further eliminate and/or minimise any potential visual impact associated with the proposed restoration scheme:

- i) Retain all hedgerows along the site boundary and reinforce with additional planting where necessary.
- ii) Provide for off-site removal, re-use and/or recovery of all buildings, plant, infrastructure and paved surfaces on completion of restoration activities;
- iii) Ensure the final restored landform is graded at a convex angle so as to merge in with the surrounding agricultural landscape.

These mitigation measures are in accordance with the recommendations provided in the DoEHLG (2004) publication. Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

## 5.0 Residual Impacts

The assessment has found that overall the proposed development will have a positive impact on the general landscape character within the study area.

## 6.0 References

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Routledge

Meath County Development Plan 2013 - 2019

DoEHLG (2004) publication. Quarries and Ancillary Activities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities