

Landscape and Visual Response
In respect of a Request for Further Information (RFI)
Ballinrooaun Quarry Extension Development
By Macro Works, February 2018



1.0 Introduction

This landscape and visual response statement has been prepared in respect of a Request for Further Information (RFI) issued by Wexford County Council in relation to the proposed Ballinrooaun Quarry Extension Development (Planning No. 20171532), which was submitted by applicants Sean & Michael Kelly. The RFI includes 14 request items, one of which (item 12) relates to landscape and visual matters. This RFI item and its associated response are provided below by Macro Works Ltd, who compiled the original Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for this project.

1.1 RFI Item 12:

“As the southern side of Ballinrooaun terrain and feature is virtually unspoiled and is visible from a wide landscape area including Wexford Town itself the applicant is requested to submit additional views and photomontages of the proposed development at extraction phase from distances further south from public view points such as Wexford racecourse or other elevated land within Wexford Town and near the Ferrycarrig Bridge.”

1.2 Response to RFI Item 12

1.2.1 Context

An assessment of landscape and visual effects was undertaken in 2017 by Macro Work Ltd in respect of the proposed Ballinrooaun Quarry Extension Development. It concluded that the significance of landscape impact during operational phase (i.e. years 1-20) is not considered to be any greater than Moderate-slight, even in the immediate vicinity of the site. Furthermore, the restoration phase of the proposed Development is classed as having an Imperceptible landscape impact for everywhere within the study area, from year 20 and beyond.

In term of visual impacts, an analysis of Visual Receptor Sensitivity at nine selected Viewshed Reference Points within the study area averaged medium-low. Crucially, of those nine viewpoints, the highest level of visual impact magnitude during operational phases was deemed Low-negligible and at only four of them. At all other VP locations the magnitude of visual impact during operational stages was deemed to be Negligible. Following the restoration phase (i.e. from year 20), the visual impact significance of all nine viewpoints was classed as being imperceptible.

From similar studies it was anticipated that the proposed Development was likely to be difficult to discern beyond approximately 5km and would be unlikely to give rise to significant landscape or visual impacts beyond approximately 2km. Wexford Town and Ferrycarrig Bridge, however, is a distance of 9-11km southwest of the Application Site. In accordance with the RFI Item 12 request, in February 2018 three additional viewpoints were captured within Wexford Town and near Ferrycarrig Bridge, as indicated in Figure 1.0 below.

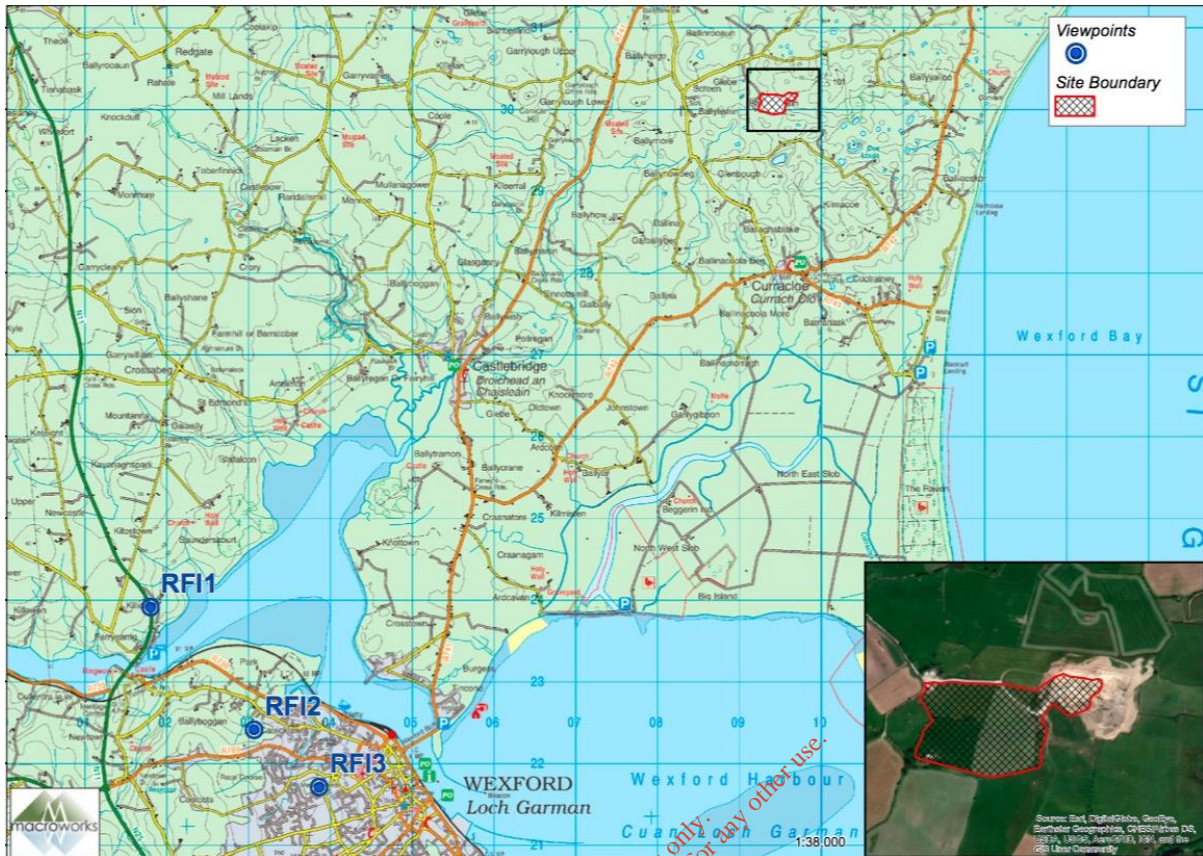


Figure 1.0 Viewpoint location map for RFI Item 12

1.2.2 Assessment Methodology

Production of this RFI Item 12 involved:

- A desktop study to establish relevant Visual Receptors from elevated viewpoints within Wexford Town or near Ferrycarrig Bridge;
- A field visit to these locations to photograph relevant viewpoints;
- The selection of three viewpoints from which to study the effects of the proposal;
- Assessment of the significance of the visual impact of the proposal as a function of visual receptor sensitivity weighed against the magnitude of the visual impact.

1.2.3 Visual Impact Assessment

1.2.3.1 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Table 1.0 Analysis of Visual Receptor Sensitivity at the 3 RFI Viewshed Reference Points

Scale of value for each criterion

Strong association	Moderate association	Mild association	Negligible association

Values associated with the view	RF11	RF12	RF13
Susceptibility of viewers to changes in views			
Recognised scenic value of the view			
Views from within highly sensitive landscape areas			
Primary views from residences			
Intensity of use, popularity (number of viewers)			
Viewer connection with the landscape			
Provision of vast, elevated panoramic views			
Sense of remoteness / tranquillity at the viewing location			
Degree of perceived naturalness			
Presence of striking or noteworthy features			
Sense of Historical, cultural and / or spiritual significance			
Rarity or uniqueness of the view			
Integrity of the landscape character within the view			
Sense of place at the viewing location			
Sense of awe			
Overall sensitivity receptor assessment	M	M	M

N = Negligible; **L** = low sensitivity; **ML** = medium-low sensitivity **M** = medium sensitivity; **HM** = High-medium sensitivity; **H** = high sensitivity; **VH** = very high sensitivity

1.2.3.2 Magnitude of Visual Effects

As with the original LVIA submitted with the planning application, the assessment of visual impacts at each of the selected RFI viewpoints is aided by photomontages of the proposed Development. For each viewpoint, the following images have been produced:

1. Existing View.
2. Montage view showing the proposed development after 5 years.
3. Montage view showing the proposed development after 9 years.
4. Montage view showing the proposed development after 14 years.
5. Montage View showing the proposed development after 20 years with mitigation complete.

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
RFI 1	Elevated view on the N11 near Ferrycarrig Bridge	Approx. 9.8km	Northeast

Representative of: Road users on N11 near Ferrycarrig Bridge

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium**

Existing View

Three rural detached dwellings anchor the mid-ground of this view, before which is a regular pastoral field. To the south (i.e. right) of the dwellings, a rich and vivid estuarine vista opens up to allow for more distant views towards the lowlands of coastal north Wexford. Above the dwellings, tall mature vegetation obscures the landscape beyond, with the exception of the skyline of Screen Hills detectable above the middle residence. However, the nature of localised land use or landform on the Screen Hills is difficult to discern from this distance along with the existing quarry at Ballinrooan.

Visual Impact after 5, 9, 14 & 20 years

Although potentially visible (with scrutiny), it is considered that any operational or restoration works are highly unlikely to be noticed from this considerable distance. Thus, there will not be a measurable effect on visual amenity particularly in the context of the rich and varied nature of the intervening landscape. The magnitude of visual impact from this location is therefore deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** of the LVIA, the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

Operational Restoration	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible
	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
RFI 2	View from Wexford County Council offices	Approx. 10.04km	Northeast

Representative of: Elevated views from Wexford County Council offices, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government offices, Wexford General Hospital and Wexford racecourse.

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium**

Existing View

The foreground of this view is occupied by two roads: the first (nearest this viewpoint) accessing the Wexford County Council offices and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government offices, while the second (lower down) connects the R769 with the R730. Above the roads, an attractive estuarine landscape is revealed, behind which the lowlands of coastal north Wexford is evident. The rich extent of visual absorption in the landscape is also evident, both in the mature trees in the mid-ground (i.e. between the foreground roads and the estuary) and near the banks of the estuary's north shore. With sufficient intent, the settlement of Castlebridge is evident approx. 5km away across the estuary. The skyline of Screen Hills forms a modest distant backdrop to the vista. Beneath this skyline, the existing quarry at Ballinrooan is scarcely discernible and is very unlikely to be noticed by a casual observer.

Visual Impact after 5, 9, 14 & 20 years

Owing to the sheer distance from this location, it is highly unlikely that any operational or restoration works at the quarry will be detectable from this distance. Furthermore, the land use of the distant Screen Hills is well beyond the focus of this vista which resides within the estuary and its immediate surrounds. Thus, there will be no evident change in land use, cover or form from here and the magnitude of visual impact from this location is deemed to be **Negligible**.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** of the LVIA, the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
Operational	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible
Restoration	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewshed Reference Point		Viewing distance	Direction of View
RFI 3	View from St. Peter's College in Wexford Town	Approx. 10.15km	Northeast

Representative of: Elevated views from Wexford Town

Receptor Sensitivity **Medium**

Existing View

A car park and playing fields of St. Peter's College Secondary School dominate the visual plane of this location, approx. 500m above Wexford Town centre. Beyond the playing grounds, a muscular townscape and attractive coastline compete for the observer's eye. Mature trees obscure much of the views out to sea, however, helping frame more distant views further north towards Screen Hills. Visible above the rooflines of College Green (housing development) immediately beyond the playing grounds, Screen Hills appears to represent a subtle but distinct highpoint in the tame and low-lying skyline of coastal north county Wexford.

The existing quarry at Ballinrooaun is discernible with scrutiny, but is not a noticeable feature in the context of the view.

Visual Impact after 5, 9, 14 & 20 years

It is unlikely that any operational or restoration works at the quarry are will be noticed from this distance and there is little evident change in land use, cover or form from this location. While the Screen Hills is a more prominent landform upon the skyline from this location it is a distant backdrop to a much more rich and compelling vista in the fore-to-middle ground. The magnitude of visual impact from this location is therefore considered to be **Negligible**.

Summary

Based on the assessment criteria and matrices outlined at **Section 1.1.3** of the LVIA, the significance of residual visual impact is summarised below.

	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Impact Magnitude	Significance of Visual Impact
Operational	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible
Restoration	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible

1.2.3.3 Conclusion

An analysis of the three selected Viewshed Reference Points resulted in an entirely consistent Visual Receptor Sensitivity and Visual Impact Magnitude. In all cases, the Visual Receptor Sensitivity was deemed 'Medium' and the Visual Impact Magnitude – be it for year 5, 9, 14 or 20 - was deemed Negligible. This is overwhelmingly as a result of the sheer distance of the proposed development from the three locations and the difficulty in discerning the existing quarry, the proposed extension, or indeed, the restored land cover pattern. Consequently, the Visual Impact Significance of all three viewpoints was classed as being 'Imperceptible.'

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