

# Appendix 16. Landscape and Visual

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## 16.1. Baseline Policy

### 16.1.1. County Wexford Review

Table 16.1 details the plans, policies and objectives contained within the *Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013*.

Table 16.1: Plans, Policies and Objectives – Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013

Section (Page)	Details
Objective TRL 1 (section 8, page 2)	To protect and conserve those natural, built and cultural features that form the resources on which the County's tourist industry is based.
Policy L1 (section 9, page 9)	In assessing developments the Council will have regard to the guidance contained in the Landscape Character Assessment. Proposed developments should reflect the guidance contained in the Landscape Character Assessment and seek to minimise the visual impact, particularly in areas designated as Sensitive and Vulnerable Landscapes.
Coastal Zone Policies (section 9)	<p>Policy CZ1 The Council shall protect and retain remaining undeveloped coastal areas and areas which are vulnerable and sensitive to inappropriate development from intensive, haphazard, unnecessary housing, tourism and recreation development.</p> <p>Policy CZ2 The Council shall undertake environmentally sensitive coastal protection works and ensure that new development does not exacerbate existing problems of coastal protection or result in altered patterns of erosion, deposition or flooding elsewhere along the coast to the detriment of important habitats or coastal features.</p> <p>Policy CZ3 Prohibit any new building or development including caravans and temporary dwellings within 100m of soft shorelines.</p> <p>Policy CZ4 Ensure that no new habitable structures are permitted below 3 metres (O.D. Malin) in the interests of public safety, the protection of property and residential amenity.</p>

Source: Wexford County Council (2007) *Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013*

There are no local area plans relating specifically to Great Island.

### 16.1.2. County Waterford Review

Table 16.2 details the plans, policies and objectives contained within the *Waterford County Development Plan 2005-2011*.

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Table 16.2: Plans, Policies and Objectives – Waterford County Development Plan 2005-2011

Section (Page)	Details
Objectives of the Plan (page 3)	The preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities and places and features of natural beauty or interest.
County Landscape Characterisation Assessment (section 2.6)	This study is currently being prepared in accordance with the Draft Landscape Guidelines from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and has a particular focus on wind turbine development. It will provide the framework for guiding developers and for the assessment of applications by the planning authority.
Rural landscape (section 8.1)	The management of the County's Landscape involves: Sustaining, conserving and enhancing the landscape diversity, character and quality; and Protecting sensitive areas from injurious developments, while providing for development and change that will benefit the rural community
Rural landscape (section 8.1)	In general, development in the landscape, should seek to avoid dominance, minimise abrupt transitions and high levels of contrast.
Rural landscape (section 8.1)	To be encouraged: Developments or land-uses that increase diversity in the landscape – subject to avoiding conflict of users; Developments or land-uses that area based upon resources that area specific to the locality – minerals, soils, energy potential, water quality – subject to the principles and policies outlined in Chapter 9: Development Standards, and the Scenic Landscape Evaluation (Appendix 4). The renewal, intensification and maintenance of established developments, land-uses and activities – subject to the sensitivity of the existing natural and cultural environment; and Developments or land-uses which integrate with, or which increase the efficiency of the use of established activities – subject to the principles and policies outlined in the Settlement Strategy, Infrastructure and Development Standards Chapters of this Plan.
Rural landscape (section 8.1)	To be discouraged: Developments that unduly impinge upon or disrupt natural linear features – such as skylines, coastlines, riverbanks; Developments or land-uses that cause a significant loss to the continuity of the character of the area; and Developments that contrast excessively (by virtue of the height, location, scale, colour or character), with the established appearance of an area.
Policy E1 (section 8.3)	When considering development in rural landscapes, the Council will assess proposals in terms of the Scenic Landscape Evaluation, the Development Standards (Chapter 9), and the proposed Design Guidelines.
Policy E2 (section 8.3)	Development in areas outside of settlements, along the coast road (from Youghal to Cheekpoint) and in upland areas, will only be considered where such proposals do not have an adverse impact on the landscape and where they satisfy the criteria set under SS3 (SS3 – to cater for the housing requirements of members of the local rural community who have a genuine local housing need in the area as set out in Section 3.13).
Standards for New Developments (section 9.2)	When considering proposals the council will assess the ability of developments to satisfy site suitability and technical considerations:- Compliance with the Scenic Landscape Evaluation

Source: Waterford County Council (2005) Waterford County Development Plan 2005-2011

### 16.1.3. County Kilkenny Review

Table 16.3 details the plans, policies and objectives contained within the *Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008-2014*.

Table 16.3: Plans, Policies and Objectives – Clare County Development Plan 2008-2014

Section (Page)	Details
Rural Strategy (page 3-13)	It is an objective of the Council to protect the character of the landscape, including views and prospects listed in this Plan and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
Policy RTA23 (page 7-18) (page 8-15)	Protect and improve the natural amenity potential and accessibility of the Rivers Nore, Suir and Barrow.  The management of the county's landscapes involves: Sustaining, conserving and enhancing the landscape diversity, character and quality; and Protecting sensitive areas from injurious development, while providing for development and change that will benefit the rural community.
Policy H52 (page 8-15)	To preserve and improve places or areas from which views or prospects of special amenity value exist, as identified in Appendix F.
Policy H53 (page 8-16)	Seek to preserve and protect the landscape character, quality and distinctiveness of County Kilkenny.
Policy H54 (page 8-16)	Assess developments having regard to the guidance set out in the Landscape Character Assessment. Proposed developments should be consistent with the various landscape policies outlined for each landscape character area specified in this plan whilst also seeking to minimise their visual impact, particularly in areas designated as sensitive and vulnerable landscapes.
Policy H55 (page 8-16)	To require that any necessary assessments, including visual impact assessments, are made when undertaking, authorising or approving development.

Source: Kilkenny County Council (2008) Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008-2014

## **16.2. Landscape Character Areas**

### **16.2.1. County Wexford**

There are several landscape character areas identified in the *County Development Plan* Appendix 5 of the *County Development Plan; The Landscape Character Assessment*, located within the 20 km radius of the site. A variable landscape sensitivity assessment ranking or scoring has been applied.

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Table 16.4: Landscape Character Areas - Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013

Landscape Character Units	Subdivisions	Landscapes within Landscapes	Policies in Relation to Landscape Character Unit
1. Uplands		Blackstairs Range	<p>The Upland Character Area is characterised by low intensity agriculture and stock rearing, coniferous forestry plantations and some areas of transitional vegetation (e.g. heath, gorse, scrub woodland).</p> <p>Within the upland areas the ridgelines and peaks are of prominence. These hilltop areas are characterised by poor drainage and higher wind/rainfall, with limited range of vegetation and land use. Stunted or absent trees are very conspicuous on account of the elevation.</p> <p>It must also be taken into account that some areas within this unit have concentrations of quarries. This character unit can be generally classified as sensitive to normal. However, the ridgelines are considered sensitive to vulnerable.</p> <p>Transitional areas are those located between lowland and upland areas. They contain relatively large fields with low hedges and scattered smaller trees. The land is mostly used for stock rearing and some mixed agricultural use. Coniferous forestry, some deciduous forestry and some transitional woodland on steep slopes can be found within these areas. The transition between the two character areas may be mostly classified normal to robust, although sensitive at specific locations.</p> <p>This distinctive and extensive area of the County forms a policy unit due to the similar visual characteristics of steep slopes, prominent ridge lines and limited shelter vegetation, rendering the area within a smaller suitability to absorb new development.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate visual impact (due to excessive bulk, scale or inappropriate siting) and will not significantly interfere or detract from scenic upland vistas, when viewed from areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Facilitate developments that have a locational requirement to be situated on elevated sites (e.g. telecommunications and wind energy structures). It is necessary however to ensure that adverse visual impacts are avoided or mitigated wherever possible.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not interrupt or penetrate distinct sections of primary ridgelines when viewed from areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Preserve the character of any areas that have not already been subject to development, which have retained a dominantly undisturbed upland/moorland character.</p> <p>Consider development on steep slopes, ensuring that it will not have a disproportionate or dominating visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from areas of the public realm.</p>
		South Wicklow Mountains	
2. Lowlands		South Hills	<p>The Lowland Character Area contains predominantly fertile lands with high levels of population and intensive land management (agriculture). The slope and topography in the area occurs in a shallow/gradual transition. Agricultural lands tend to be characterised by extensive views across large fields as a result of the generally low well-trimmed hedges. This character unit may be generally classified robust to normal, however sensitive areas or landscape factors can be found at specific locations.</p> <p>Within the Lowlands there are a number of important sub-divisions – and 'landscape within landscape';</p> <p>There are two areas of elevated lands – the North and South Hills which contain concentrations of elevated areas that enclose or visually dominate the local countryside. Within these areas there are a higher than normal concentrations of potentially conspicuous sites where additional vigilance will be required when evaluating planning applications.</p> <p>In contrast to the elevated areas there are two highly scenic major River Corridors – The Slaney and the Barrow – that transect the lowlands of the County. Of these the Slaney is the most exceptional on account of its extent, its centrality to the County and its unspoilt character. This is another area where additional</p>
		North Hills	
		Slaney/Bann River Corridor	
		Barrow River Corridor	

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Landscape Character Units	Subdivisions	Landscapes within Landscapes	Policies in Relation to Landscape Character Unit
			<p>vigilance will be required when evaluating planning applications.</p> <p>Recognise that these areas are made up of a variety of working landscapes and contain the vast proportion of the County's population within principle towns and on rural holdings. These also incorporate all of the major national primary and regional roads, and railways.</p> <p>Continue to permit development that can utilise existing infrastructure, whilst taking account of absorption opportunities provided by the landscape and prevailing vegetation.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not unduly result in detrimental impacts on the landscape at a local or micro level as viewed from areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Consider development on steep slopes, ensuring that it will not have a disproportionate or dominating visual impact on the surrounding environment as seen from areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Recognise the substantial pockets of residential and rural landuses in some locations and the emerging pressures for differing landuses of industry, wind energy and residential development in this policy area.</p> <p>Continue to facilitate appropriate development in a progressive manner that respects the scale character and sensitivities of the landscape.</p> <p>Recognise that in this low-lying open environment, tall and bulky development sometimes can have a disproportionate impact against the landscape particularly when viewed from the predominantly low-lying areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate effect on the existing character of the landscape in terms of location, design, and visual prominence.</p>
<b>3. Coasts</b>	<p>East Coastal</p> <p>South Coastal</p>		<p>Coastal areas of County Wexford have a distinctive character that often overlaps abruptly with the Lowland Character of which is abundant. In general the flat topography and the absence of rock shores means that the character of the coastal areas is different for only a short distance from the shore. This generalisation has an important exception that leads to the definition of two different types of Coastal Landscape in the County;</p> <p>The East Coast is characterised by long, relatively straight coasts of sand or shingle backed up by low cliffs.</p> <p>The South Coast is characterised by significant areas of enclosure – such as Bannow Bay, Ballyteige, Tacumshin and Lady's Island. These features mean that the coastal character penetrates much further inland than on the east coast.</p> <p>The lowland coast is considered a separate core policy area as it has significantly different landscape attributes, sensitivities and robustness.</p> <p>The assessment recognises that substantial residential development exists in some locations and that further pressures for residential development in this policy area will remain.</p> <p>Facilitate appropriate tourism and amenity development in a progressive manner, where feasible, that reflects the scale, character and sensitivities of the landscape.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not have a disproportionate effect on the existing character of the coastal environment in terms of location, design, and visual prominence.</p> <p>Encourage development that will not interrupt or penetrate distinct linear sections of primary ridge lines and coastlines when viewed from areas of the public realm.</p> <p>Preserve any areas that have not been subject to recent or prior development and have retained a dominantly undisturbed coastal character.</p>

Source: Wexford County Council (2007) *Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013 Appendix V – Landscape Character Assessment*



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Landscape sensitivity ratings are applied to landscape types located within the units and subdivisions set out above. The ranking system applied is outlined below.

- *1=degraded – Areas characterised by breakdown of natural processes or pollution (e.g. cut over bogs, old mineral waste areas).*
- *2=Robust – Areas of existing development and infrastructure. new development reinforces existing desirable land use patterns.*
- *3= Normal – A common character type with a potential to absorb a wide range of new developments.*
- *4=Sensitive – Distinctive character with some capacity to absorb a limited range of appropriate new developments while sustaining its existing character.*
- *5=Vulnerable – Very distinctive features with a very low capacity to absorb new development without significant alterations to existing character*

Sensitivity rankings are applied to specific landscape types, a variety of which can be found in each unit or subdivision.

- Vulnerable Landscapes – linear environmental features, e.g. shores of the main waterbodies (lakes, large rivers, coasts, estuaries) and the ridges or skylines of mountains, hills, promontories and headlands.
- Sensitive, normal, robust and degraded landscapes as determined by combining land use categories detailed below from the CORINE landcover project.

**Sensitive Landscapes**

Natural Grassland	Bare Rocks	Sparsely vegetated areas
Moors and heathland	Transitional Woodland Scrub	Beaches, Dunes, Sands
Estuaries	Broad Leaved Forest	Inland Marshes
Water Courses	Water Bodies	Coastal Lagoons
Mixed forest	Agricultural Land with significant areas of natural vegetation	

**Normal Landscapes**

Pasture Lands	Non Irrigated Arable Land	Annual crops associated with permanent crops.
Complex Cultivation Pattern	Coniferous Forest	

**Robust Landscapes**

Continuous Urban Fabric	Discontinuous Urban Fabric	Industrial or Commercial Units
Airports	Sports and leisure facilities	

**Degraded Landscapes**

Mineral Extraction Sites	Construction Sites	Dump sites
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**16.2.2. County Waterford**

At the time of undertaking this EIS there was no landscape character assessment for County Waterford.

### 16.2.3. County Kilkenny

There are eight Landscape Character Areas in County Kilkenny located within a 20 km radius of the site. The following Table details the descriptions attributed to each of the Landscape Character Areas in *Landscape Appraisal of County Kilkenny*, prepared for Kilkenny County Council by CAAS Environmental Services Ltd. (2003).

Table 16.5: Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Area	Description
Barrow Valley	<p>The Barrow Valley is an extensive river valley flowing in a north-south pattern to the east of the County. Many local villages have become well established along the riverbanks, such as Graiguenamanagh and Goresbridge.</p> <p>The river valley is identifiable by its floodplain levels and slopes of deciduous trees with a slow progression to pasture lands. Running along the Barrow Drive, the riverbanks are predominately grassland. Large tillage fields with few inner boundaries are particular to this area. Estate landholdings are bounded by stone walls and gateposts with large parcels of grazing lands within.</p> <p>The terrain is undulating with extensive views of mountains (Castlecomer, Freagh and Brandon Hills and South Leinster Way) and coniferous plantations (along Brandon Tow Path). Distant views also include the Blackstairs Mountains in Co. Carlow.</p> <p>The area is perceived as highly scenic as well as special and sensitive in landscape terms, providing significant visual amenity value to the County. Consequently it is considered to have tourism potential, particularly around Graiguenamanagh.</p>
Brandon Hill	<p>This character area is a large upland area to the east of the County, whose principal upland areas include the Brandon and Croghan Hills to the east of the County. The hills are in an almost circular shape around the town of Graiguenamanagh. The terrain in this upland area slopes from the River Barrow valley at the east and the River Nore at the west. The primary and secondary ridgelines of the Croghan Hills vary in elevation from 263 to 365m above sea level, and the Brandon Hill primary ridgeline has an elevation of 515m above sea level.</p> <p>The elevated nature of this physical unit provides a defined skyline and significant and scenic views over the scenic River Barrow and Nore valleys and the towns of Inistioge and Graiguenamanagh. These uplands also form part of the South Leinster Way walking route. Distant views also include those of the Blackstairs Mountains.</p> <p>The area is perceived as highly scenic and of significant visual amenity value within the County, and a number of scenic drives are identified. Brandon Hill and its environs are perceived as sensitive landscapes, with low and limited development potential, with only tourism development being considered acceptable.</p>
Nore Valley	<p>The Nore Valley is an extensive low-lying area of the County, which bisects its central plain, moving in a north to south-east direction. The terrain is undulating with vegetative/wooded slopes, rising from the river valley. This lowland unit, characterised by smooth terrain and low vegetation, has extensive open mountain views (e.g. Castlecomer Plateau, Brandon Hill and the Slieveardagh Mountains).</p> <p>The slopes of the Nore Valley conform to the general river valley pattern. Natural vegetation (i.e. native trees and shrubs) generally occurs on the floodplain slopes and riverbanks. Grassland is common on gentle slopes and floodplain levels. Some stretches of the valley have deciduous trees lining the slopes with a slow progression into pasturelands.</p> <p>The area is perceived as being scenic and special in landscape terms, particularly to the north of Kilkenny City and to the south-east around Inistioge and Thomastown where preferred scenic drives are found.</p>
South Eastern Hills	<p>This large character area comprises the low lying upland area bordering the River Suir Valley at the southeast of the County. The terrain rises from the Kilkenny basin to the north and the lowlands to the southeast (see Sections 4.6 and 4.7), which gives rise to several small ridgelines at an elevation of approximately 250m above sea level.</p> <p>Local views include those of the River Suir and into the neighbouring County of Wexford as well as significant and scenic views over the surrounding areas of Mullinavat, Ballyhale, Knocktopher and the River Nore valley as well as Brandon Hill. Distant views include those of the South Leinster Way Mountains. This area is characterised by open undulating lands with regular (medium sized) field patterns, where some rock outcrops occur.</p> <p>The settlement pattern in this area is of a low density, with most residential development concentrated in local villages such as Glenmore.</p> <p>Although the area is generally perceived as having no special value in landscape terms, the environs of Glenmore were identified as having special scenic value (refer to Document 2). The unit is perceived as having potential for certain types of developments such as wind farms and forestry.</p>

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Landscape Character Area	Description
South Kilkenny Lowlands	<p>This expansive lowland area to the south-west of the County has extensive views of the River Suir valley and the South Kilkenny Uplands, Tory Hill and Carrigatubbrid Hill. Distant views include the Comeragh Mountains. This area has open lands with regular (medium sized) field patterns. Medium sized hedgerows act as field boundaries where few trees can also be found. Rock outcroppings are a feature of this area.</p> <p>The unit is perceived as being special in landscape terms, particularly around Piltown, Mooncoin and Kilmacow. The area is perceived as being generally suitable for tourism development, and other type of projects can be acceptable in the environs of Waterford City.</p>
South Western Hills	<p>The south-western Kilkenny hills, which comprise the Kilmacoliver and Carricktriss Hills form a low-lying upland area (i.e. upland area with lower elevation to that of Brandon or Slieveardagh Hills). The terrain dramatically rises, steeply sloping from the Kilkenny basin and the south Kilkenny lowlands. The area encompasses an undulating landscape of several hills, with primary and secondary ridgelines at an average elevation of approximately 300m above sea level.</p> <p>The elevated nature of this physical unit provides a defined skyline and significant and scenic views over the surrounding areas of Kilmacow, Mooncoin and Mullinavat.</p> <p>The area is perceived as having certain landscape value, in particular the western hills of the unit.</p>
South Western Hills Southern Transition Zone	<p>The South Western Transition area has been subdivided into two parts due to existing differences on landscape physical features (i.e. subsoils, soils, geology and topography).</p> <p>C1 South Hills Transition Area (northwest) C2 South Hills Transition Area (south)</p> <p>These transition areas encircle the Kilmacoliver and Carricktriss Mountains, with subunit C1 beginning in the environs of Windgap village and subunit C2 running from Tubbrid to Owinging - This transition area passes close to the South Leinster Way. These transition units are tight as a result of the abrupt transition from the lowlands to the south western uplands in the area.</p> <p>This unit is perceived as having no special landscape or scenic value.</p>
Suir Valley	<p>The Suir valley lies at the southern County boundary, close to Waterford City. The valley moves in a west to north-east direction, parallel with the Waterford-Kilkenny boundary. It is a wide and fertile valley, traditionally associated with dairying and more recently with fruit and horticultural nursery sectors.</p> <p>The terrain is undulating with extensive views of Brownswood Hill and the Carrigatubbrid Wooded slopes. Distant views also include those of the Slievenamon and the Comeragh Mountains. The slopes of the Suir Valley conform to the general river valley pattern of pasture lands rising to slopes and the river flood plain, as outlined in Section 3.8.</p> <p>The river valley is perceived as having special scenic and landscape value, in particular to the west, near the towns of Mooncoin and Fiddown, and to the east around Glenmore. The area is considered to have tourism development potential.</p>

Source: CAAS Environmental Services Ltd. (2003) Landscape Appraisal of County Kilkenny