



APPENDIX 14-2

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENTS



Table of Contents

1.	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TABLES	1
1.1	Offaly Landscape Character Areas	1
1.1.1	ILCA 4 - North-western Lowland Farmland and Marginal Peatland	1
1.1.2	ILCA 6 – Grand Canal Corridor	3
1.1.3	ILCA 3 – Central Wetlands.....	5
1.1.4	ILCA 1 – Birr Plains	7
1.1.5	ILCA 5 – River Shannon and Callows.....	9
1.2	Westmeath Landscape Character Areas	11
1.2.1	LCA 7 – Western Lowlands.....	11

1. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TABLES

This appendix comprises an impact assessment addressing the landscape effects of the Proposed Project upon each designated Landscape Character Area (LCA) scoped in for assessment in Chapter 14 of this EIAR.

The impact assessment for each LCA is set out in its own table below, organised by county. In the tables, the term ‘site’ refers to the Proposed Project site and the discussion of theoretical visibility in each LCA refers to Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping as outlined in Section 14.3 ‘Visibility of the Proposed Project’ of Chapter 14.

It is recommended that the impact assessments in this appendix are read in conjunction with Figure 14-14: ZTV & Designated LCAs Map in the main chapter. This map illustrates the boundary of each LCA and is overlain by the Half-Blade ZTV, which extends to the 15km LCA Study Area for the assessment of effects on designated LCAs; the brief and full methodologies for determining the LCA Study Area boundary are provided respectively in Section 14.2.1 ‘Scope and Definition of LVIA Study Area’ of the main chapter and in Section 1.4.2 in *Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology*.

Regarding the ‘Significance of Effect’ ratings in the tables below: The definition of classification is taken from the ‘*Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*’ of the Environmental Protection Agency of Ireland (EPA) (2022); refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Assessment Matrix’ in Appendix 14-1.

1.1 Offaly Landscape Character Areas

As discussed in Section 14.4.1.1 of Chapter 14, a landscape character assessment has not yet been conducted or published for County Offaly. Consequently, County Offaly does not have any designated LCAs. Therefore, MKO has prepared Interim (undesignated) Landscape Character Areas for the area of County Offaly located within the LCA Study Area (15 km from the proposed turbines for assessment of Landscape Character). The Interim LCAs scoped in for assessment in Chapter 14 are assessed below.

1.1.1 ILCA 4 - North-western Lowland Farmland and Marginal Peatland

Offaly ILCA 4 – North-western Lowland Farmland and Marginal Peatland	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of ILCA	The proposed turbines are located within this ILCA. At its furthest point, this ILCA extends approx. 24km east from turbine T15.
ILCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lowland Area with minor changes in ground level ➤ Contrast of large areas of degraded cutover bog and agricultural fields ➤ Area of eskers to the north
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	The proposed turbines are situated within an area classified as having ‘Moderate’ landscape sensitivity as outlined in the Offaly County Development Plan (OCDP). The OCDP notes that such areas “can

Offaly ILCA 4 – North-western Lowland Farmland and Marginal Peatland	
	<p><i>accommodate development pressure but with limitations in scale and magnitude.</i>” Furthermore, the OCDP specifically acknowledges that cutaway bogs within these moderately sensitive areas “<i>may be appropriate for other sensitively designed and located developments, including renewable energy.</i>”</p> <p>Moreover, the proposed turbines are located within an area identified as ‘Open for Consideration’ for wind energy development within the OCDP, with the exception of T05 which is located on the boundary of an area ‘Not Deemed Suitable’ for wind energy. Specifically, as discussed in Section 14.4.1.1.4 of Chapter 14, the Proposed Wind Farm is located within Wind Energy Potential Area 5, which the OCDP notes that the “<i>extensive flats of peatlands in this area offer potential to accommodate wind farm developments.</i>”</p> <p>Overall, the majority of this ILCA within the LCA Study Area is predominantly classified as having low or medium landscape sensitivity. It is acknowledged that some areas of High Landscape Sensitivity are located within this ILCA. However, as outlined in Section 14.7.3.1.3 of Chapter 14, these sensitive landscapes—such as Clara Bog—are visually set back from the proposed turbines, and as such, will not alter the physical fabric of these high-sensitivity areas.</p> <p>In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be Medium.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the ILCA	<p>There is primarily full theoretical visibility throughout the entirety of this ILCA located within the LCA Study Area with some patches of no theoretical visibility due to localised undulations within the landscape, such as Bellair, Cor and Endrim Hill.</p> <p>However, in reality, as demonstrated in Volume 2: Photomontage Booklet, visibility and scale of the proposed turbines within these flat landscapes diminishes significantly with distance.</p>
Cumulative Context	<p>There are no other wind farms located within this ILCA.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>While there are currently no other wind farms located within this ILCA, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV shows stretches where both the proposed and cumulative turbines are theoretically visible. The introduction of the proposed turbines will give rise to some cumulative effects; however, any in-combination or sequential views that do occur will be intermittent and largely obscured by intervening vegetation within the flat landscape.</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are likely to occur. Cumulative effects that do arise are incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
Magnitude of Change <i>(Definition – from Section 1.7.5 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	<p>Magnitude = Moderate.</p> <p>Rationale: Physical changes to the physical fabric of the landscape as a result of the Proposed Project, which will be primarily confined to the site itself. The wider extent of this ILCA, will remain unaffected. In terms of</p>

Offaly ILCA 4 – North-western Lowland Farmland and Marginal Peatland	
	<p>visibility, visibility will be most prominent to the immediate vicinity of the site, with visibility rapidly diminishing with distance.</p> <p>On balance, the magnitude of change to this ILCA deemed to be ‘Moderate’.</p> <p>For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 14.7.4 Magnitude of Landscape Change in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Medium x Moderate = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>‘An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends’.</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Siting and design of the proposed turbines were developed for peatland landscape character types within which the proposed turbines are located. ➤ The flat nature of the site and the surrounding landscape (and this ILCA generally) means that perception of the scale of the turbines will reduce significantly with distance. ➤ The majority of this ILCA’s land area is designated as ‘Open to Consideration’ for wind energy development by the Wind Energy Strategy in County Offaly, including the location of the Proposed Wind Farm and the majority of the proposed turbines (T05 is located on the boundary of an area ‘Not Deemed Suitable’). ➤ The effect of the flat ILCA is compounded by the presence of hedgerows, mature treelines, and dense forestry within the landscape. This vegetative screening, located between visual receptors and the proposed turbines has the effect of either removing views altogether, removing large numbers of turbines from views, or making those views of the proposed turbines intermittent in nature. The effect of this screening is amplified in terms of impeding views of the proposed turbines for such a flat site. Therefore, the greatest effect on landscape character will be localised to the parts of this ILCA in close proximity to the site.
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	<p>Moderate (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i></p>

1.1.2

ILCA 6 – Grand Canal Corridor

Offaly ILCA 6 – Grand Canal Corridor	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of ILCA	<p>At its closest point, this ILCA is located approximately 3km southeast from the nearest proposed turbine (T03).</p>

Offaly ILCA 6 – Grand Canal Corridor	
ILCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Linear landscape character area defined by the waterway and adjacent infrastructure such as towpaths. ➤ Canal corridor mostly enclosed by hedgerow and tree lines often opens up to views across surrounding landscape. ➤ Minimal topographical variation of waterway and ancillary elements, unlike the surrounding landscape. ➤ The canal passes through and links a very wide range of landscape types. ➤ Focus of a wide range of uses, in particular, for recreation and tourism purposes.
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>This ILCA is a designated Area of High Amenity in the OCDP – Grand Canal. Table 4.20 in the OCDP notes that the Grand Canal Corridor is identified as a “<i>focus for a wide range of uses, in particular, for recreational and tourism purposes</i>”. The table further notes that “<i>the visual quality of the surrounding area is intrinsic to maintaining the attractiveness of the Grand Canal Corridor</i>”, and outlines that the “<i>corridor particularly outside of settlements</i>” is “<i>especially sensitive to large development structures.</i>”</p> <p>The majority of this ILCA falls within an area designated as ‘Areas Not Deemed Suitable’ for wind energy development. However, a small section to the west of the ILCA is identified as ‘Open for Consideration’.</p> <p>Nevertheless, in consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be High.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the ILCA	<p>There is primarily full theoretical visibility along the extent of this ILCA within the LCA Study Area. However, in reality, as discussed in Section 14.7.3.3 of Chapter 14, visibility is far less along the canal corridor. Along the Grand Canal, boundary vegetation significantly limits visibility towards the proposed turbines, particularly given the flat nature of the surrounding landscape. As such, visibility is predominantly limited to elevated locations, such as canal bridges, as demonstrated in VP03.</p>
Cumulative Context	<p>There are no other windfarms located within this ILCA.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>While there are currently no other wind farms located within this ILCA, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV illustrates that much of the Grand Canal route has theoretical visibility of both proposed and cumulative turbines.</p> <p>Given the introduction of the proposed turbines within the wider landscape, alongside existing cumulative turbines to the south of this ILCA, such as Derrinlough and Cloghan Wind Farms, some cumulative effects will occur. However, while the proposed turbines may give rise to potential in-combination or sequential views, such views will be intermittent and brief, occurring only along short stretches of the canal, primarily from elevated locations such as bridges (as demonstrated in VP03).</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Cumulative effects that do arise are incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>

Offaly ILCA 6 – Grand Canal Corridor	
Magnitude of Change <i>(Definition – from Section 1.7.5 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	Magnitude = Slight. Rationale: The Proposed Wind Farm does not materially alter the physical fabric or affect the key characteristics of this ILCA. The addition of the proposed turbines in the wider landscape would only result in low-level changes to the overall aesthetics of the landscape views from this ILCA. Therefore, the Proposed Project is considered to have an overall Slight effect on the overall landscape character of this ILCA. For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 1.7.4 “Magnitude of Landscape Change” in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i> .
Significance of Effect	High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2022) <i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i> Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i> .
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The dense hedgerows and mature tree lines bordering the banks of the canal and adjacent fields limits visibility in many places along the extent of this ILCA. ➤ The flat and low-lying nature of the ILCA means that the perception of the scale of the turbines will reduce significantly with distance.
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	Slight (EPA, 2022) <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities”.</i>

1.1.3

ILCA 3 – Central Wetlands

Offaly ILCA 3 – Central Wetlands	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of ILCA	At its closest point, this ILCA is located approximately 3.4km southeast from the nearest proposed turbine (T03).
ILCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Previously cutaway bogs in the process of transition from industrial uses to after-use revegetation and wetland areas. ➤ Currently exposed cutaway bogs and associated drainage systems. ➤ Flat landscape characterised by mature tree lines and hedgerows. ➤ Landscape pattern not clearly distinct. ➤ Generally characterised by open, expansive vistas where these are available. ➤ Largely free of buildings and associated installations although national electricity transmission infrastructure is present;
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm	A substantial proportion of the area of this ILCA is characterised by the presence of the Area of High Amenity – Lough Boora Discovery Park,

Offaly ILCA 3 – Central Wetlands	
Development	<p>which encompasses “<i>Turraun Wetlands, Finnamore Lakes Area and Loch Clochan Wetlands</i>” and is described in the OCDP as “<i>an open, expansive vista that is currently largely free of buildings and associated installations such as overhead wires</i>”.</p> <p>As a result, and in conjunction with the presence of ‘Other Eskers’, which are also recognised as high sensitivity landscape features, the majority of this ILCA is classified as having High Landscape Sensitivity in the OCDP. Other areas, particularly further west are predominantly classified as having low or medium landscape sensitivity.</p> <p>Large Areas within this ILCA are deemed as ‘Areas Not Deemed Suitable’ for wind energy development. However, a stretch to the west of the ILCA is identified as ‘Open for Consideration’.</p> <p>In consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be High.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the ILCA	<p>There is predominantly full theoretical visibility within this ILCA, with the exception of a localised pocket of no theoretical visibility resulting from topographical screening provided by Cloghan Hill.</p>
Cumulative Context	<p>The existing Derrinlough, Leabeg, Cloghan wind farms and permitted Lea Mor turbine are located within this ILCA within the LCA Study Area.</p> <p>The permitted Cush Wind Farm is located beyond the LCA Study Area, approximately 17.4km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine (T03).</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>As illustrated by the Cumulative Comparative ZTV, there is predominantly full theoretical visibility of both the proposed and cumulative turbines within this ILCA, with some patches of only theoretical cumulative visibility to the west. There are a few pockets (primarily to the east) where there only proposed turbine visibility occurs.</p> <p>Given the extent of existing wind energy development within this ILCA, some degree of cumulative landscape effects is anticipated to occur from the addition of the proposed turbines in the wider landscape. However, the proposed turbines are not located within this ILCA and will not increase the physical density of turbines within it. Rather, any cumulative landscape effects that do occur will only relate to the broader landscape context.</p> <p>Generally, within this ILCA, the proposed and cumulative turbines will be located in opposite directions, and therefore, will not be visible within the same field of view. Where in-combination views do occur, the proposed turbines will be visually setback from the cumulative turbines and will appear as small-scale elements in the distant background.</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
Magnitude of Change (Definition – from	<p>Magnitude = Slight.</p>

Offaly ILCA 3 – Central Wetlands	
<i>Section 1.7.5 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	<p>Rationale: The Proposed Wind Farm does not materially alter the physical fabric of this ILCA. In terms of visibility, the proposed turbines will be most prominent in the immediate vicinity of the site, with visibility rapidly diminishing with distance across the ILCA.</p> <p>In general, the Proposed Project will not affect the key characteristics of the ILCA. The visibility of the proposed turbines in the distant landscape would result in only low-level changes to the overall landscape character and visual aesthetics of this ILCA. Therefore, the Proposed Project is considered to have an overall Slight effect on the overall landscape character of this ILCA.</p> <p>For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 1.7.4 “Magnitude of Landscape Change” in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matri’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The flat and low-lying nature of the ILCA means that the perception of the scale of the turbines will reduce significantly with distance (beyond 5km of the site) ➤ There are large parts of this ILCA where there will be no visibility of the proposed turbines due to vegetative screening occurring from the dense mature forestry, particularly from the Lough Boora Parkland and Turraun Nature Park. ➤ The landscape character of Lough Boora Discovery Park, the key sensitivity of this ILCA will not be materially altered by the Proposed Project. ➤ The theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines largely overlaps with areas already subject to theoretical visibility of cumulative turbines. There are very few locations where the proposed turbines would introduce turbine developments as entirely new or novel elements within the landscape.
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	<p>Slight (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i></p>

1.1.4

ILCA 1 – Birr Plains

Offaly ILCA 1 – Birr Plains	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of ILCA	Located approximately 8.3km southeast from the nearest proposed turbine (T14).

Offaly ILCA 1 – Birr Plains	
ILCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generally, land gradually/gently rises eastwards towards the Slieve Bloom Mountains. ➤ Series of hills running south-west to north-east parallel to Slieve Bloom Mountains including Kiltubbrid Island, Knockhill and Drinagh, Mountbolus. ➤ Orderly agricultural field patterns predominant. ➤ High degree of tree cover in the form of mature hedgerows. ➤ Few isolated areas of forestry or bog.
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>Although this ILCA is located within an area ‘Not Deemed Suitable’ for wind energy development in the OCDP, the majority of this ILCA is primarily characterised by Low landscape sensitivity. This ILCA within the LCA Study Area holds minimal amenity value or landscape significance, except for AHA - Pallas Lake, acknowledged in the OCDP for its "<i>unspoiled rural setting,</i>"</p> <p>It is therefore considered a landscape of Low landscape sensitivity to wind energy development.</p>
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the ILCA	<p>There is predominantly full theoretical visibility across this ILCA within the LCA Study Area, except for localised pockets of no theoretical visibility resulting from localised topographical undulations.</p>
Cumulative Context	<p>There are no other wind farms located within this ILCA.</p>
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>While there are currently no other wind farms located within this ILCA, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV indicates predominantly full theoretical visibility of both the proposed and cumulative turbines, with some patches of proposed-only theoretical visibility occurring along the eastern extent of the ILCA.</p> <p>From elevated vantage points, both proposed and cumulative turbines may be visible, giving rise to limited in-combination and sequential views. However, given the distance, the proposed turbines will generally appear visually set back and be perceived as small-scale elements in the background.</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
Magnitude of Change <i>(Definition – from Section 1.5.2.2 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	<p>Magnitude = Slight.</p> <p>Rationale: The Proposed Wind Farm does not materially alter the physical fabric of this ILCA. In terms of visibility, where visibility does occur, the proposed turbines will be perceived as small-scale elements in the distant background relative to the landscape. As a result, the visibility of the proposed turbines in the distant landscape would result in only low-level changes to the overall landscape character and visual aesthetics of this ILCA. Therefore, the Proposed Project is considered to have an overall Slight effect on the overall landscape character of this ILCA.</p>

Offaly ILCA 1 – Birr Plains	
	For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 1.7.4 “Magnitude of Landscape Change” in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i> .
Significance of Effect	<p>Low x Slight = Minor/Negligible = Not Significant (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large parts of this ILCA are located outside of the LCA Study Area for effects on landscape character. ➤ Effects on landscape character of this ILCA as a result of the Proposed Project is substantially mitigated by distance, with the proposed turbines primarily seen as small-scale elements in the background of views. ➤ Visibility is limited due to the intervening vegetation bordering the agricultural fields that dominate the landcover of this ILCA.
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	<p>Not Significant (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p>

1.1.5

ILCA 5 – River Shannon and Callows

Offaly ILCA 5 – River Shannon and Callows	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of ILCA	This ILCA is located approximately 9.7km west from the nearest proposed turbine (T01).
ILCA Key Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lands liable to flooding. ➤ Water meadows, important breeding grounds for migrant birds. ➤ Local scenic views along the river. ➤ Includes local heritage sites such as Clonmacnoise and the Callows.
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	<p>The entirety of this ILCA is designated as being of High Landscape Sensitivity in the OCDP. This is due to its inclusion of both the Clonmacnoise Heritage Zone and the River Shannon and Callows Area of High Amenity. The Clonmacnoise Heritage Zone occupies the northernmost section of the ILCA, while the River Shannon and Callows extend across the remaining expanse of the ILCA. The OCDP describes this area as <i>“extremely sensitive to all categories of development, given its scientific, ecological, recreational and scenic value.”</i></p> <p>The entirety of the ILCA is classified as an area ‘Not Open to Consideration’ for wind energy development.</p> <p>As such, in consideration of the above noted classifications and designations, sensitivity to wind farm development is deemed to be High.</p>

Offaly ILCA 5 – River Shannon and Callows	
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the ILCA	The entirety of this ILCA has primarily full theoretical visibility, with some pockets of no theoretical visibility resulting from localised topographical undulations. Notably, stretches of no theoretical visibility are present within the Clonmacnoise site itself.
Cumulative Context	There are no other wind farms located within this ILCA.
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>While there are currently no other wind farms located within this ILCA, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV indicates pockets of theoretical visibility of both the proposed and cumulative turbines.</p> <p>Cumulative effects may occur where both the proposed and cumulative turbines are visible from localised points in elevation within the landscape. However, within this generally low-lying flat landscape, long-range views of the proposed turbines will be limited by intervening vegetation. As such, while some degree of cumulative landscape effect is anticipated from the addition of the proposed turbines in the wider landscape, visibility will be distant, with the turbines appearing visually set back and often screened by intervening vegetation.</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
Magnitude of Change <i>(Definition – from Section 1.7.5 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	<p>Magnitude = Slight.</p> <p>Rationale: The Proposed Wind Farm does not materially alter the physical fabric of this ILCA. In terms of visibility, where visibility does occur, the proposed turbines will be perceived as small-scale elements in the distant background. As a result, the visibility of the proposed turbines in the distant landscape would result in only low-level changes to the overall landscape character and visual aesthetics of this ILCA. Therefore, the Proposed Project is considered to have an overall Slight effect on the overall landscape character of this ILCA.</p> <p>For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 1.7.4 “Magnitude of Landscape Change” in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>High x Slight = Moderate/Minor = Moderate (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.”</i></p> <p>Refer to Section 1.7.5 ‘Landscape Effects Matrix’ in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large parts of this ILCA are located outside of the LCA Study Area for effects on landscape character. ➤ Clonmacnoise Heritage Zone, an area of high amenity value within this ILCA (northern section of the ILCA within the LCA Study Area) has large patches of no theoretical visibility, particularly within the monastic site itself.

Offaly ILCA 5 – River Shannon and Callows	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Effects on landscape character of this ILCA as a result of the Proposed Project is substantially mitigated by distance, with the proposed turbines primarily seen as small elements in the background of views. ➤ The hedgerows and mature tree lines bordering the River Shannon and adjacent fields limits visibility in many places along the extent of this ILCA.
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	<p>Not Significant (EPA, 2022) <i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.”</i></p>

1.2

Westmeath Landscape Character Areas

1.2.1

LCA 7 – Western Lowlands

Westmeath LCA 7 – Western Lowlands	
Distance from site to Nearest/Furthest Area of LCA	This LCA is located approximately 3.6km north from the nearest proposed turbine (T10).
LCA Key Characteristics (Chapter 14 of the Westmeath County Development Plan, 2021-2027 (WCDP))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>“The character of this area contains a variety of landscape features including eskers, lakes, and bogs.</i> ➤ <i>This landscape is generally low-lying but is characterised by a gently undulating topography, particularly around Mount Temple and to the northwest of Moate.</i> ➤ <i>Visual containment in the landscape is created by elevated areas and glacial kames, irregular ridges or mounds of gravel deposited by melting glaciers feature at intervals.</i> ➤ <i>Low-lying areas, however, are generally contained visually due to high quality, species rich hedges that dominate field boundaries in the area, limiting the extent of views across the landscape.</i> ➤ <i>This area includes the settlements of Moyvore, Ballymore, Mount Temple, Moate and Ballinahown and is bounded to the east by the change in topography that characterises the South-Central Hills Character Area at Ballymore and west of Rosemount.”</i>
Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Farm Development	There are no areas of high amenity attributed to this LCA, however some of the bogs within this LCA are designated as natural heritage areas or special areas of conservation. The LCA does not comprise any unique landscape features of county or national interest. The WCDP outlines this LCA as having a Low capacity for wind energy development, therefore this LCA is assigned a Medium landscape sensitivity to wind farm development.
Visibility of the Proposed Project within the LCA	There is primarily full theoretical visibility within 10km of the proposed turbines, with some localised patches of no theoretical visibility. Beyond 10 km, particularly to the north, larger areas of no theoretical visibility occur due to topographical undulations within the landscape.
Cumulative Context	There are no other windfarms located within this LCA.

Westmeath LCA 7 – Western Lowlands	
Cumulative Landscape Effects	<p>While there are currently no other wind farms located within this LCA, the Cumulative Comparative ZTV indicates stretches of both the proposed and cumulative turbines theoretical visibility.</p> <p>Some sequential views may arise where the proposed and cumulative turbines are located in opposite fields of view. Where in-combination views do occur, they will generally be distant and partially screened, with the proposed turbines perceived as small-scale elements within the wider landscape.</p> <p>Overall, no Significant cumulative landscape effects are deemed to occur. Any limited cumulative effects that do occur have been accounted for and incorporated into the magnitude of change below.</p>
Magnitude of Change <i>(Definition – from Section 1.7.5 of Appendix 14-1)</i>	<p>Magnitude = Slight.</p> <p>Rationale: The Proposed Wind Farm does not materially alter the physical fabric of this LCA. In terms of visibility, visibility will be most prominent to the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Wind Farm site (within 5km from the proposed turbines), with visibility rapidly diminishing with distance. On balance, the magnitude of change to this LCA deemed to be Slight.</p> <p>For the definition of this rating, refer to Section 1.7.4 “Magnitude of Landscape Change” in <i>Appendix 14-1: LVIA Methodology</i>.</p>
Significance of Effect	<p>Medium x Slight = Minor = Slight (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i></p>
Mitigation Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is a large area of this LCA within the LCA Study Area where there is no theoretical visibility of the turbines of the Proposed Project. ➤ Visibility of the proposed turbines will be limited to elevated vantage points within this LCA, where the turbines will be seen as small background features. ➤ Effects on landscape character of this LCA as a result of the Proposed Project is substantially mitigated by distance. ➤ Visibility of the proposed turbines will be limited by the mature hedgerows and treelines bordering the agricultural fields within this generally low lying LCA (as described in the LCA Characteristics).
Residual Landscape Effect (incl. mitigating factors)	<p>Slight (EPA, 2022)</p> <p><i>“An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.”</i></p>