

12 Landscape and Visual

12.1 Introduction

This section of the report describes the landscape and visual constraints for the northern study area which includes appreciable parts of four counties, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny and Laois together with a very small segment (less than 2 sq. km) of County Wicklow.

12.2 Methodology

The assessment of the landscape constraints was prepared with regard to the following:

- Appraisal of Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Discovery Series and 1:126,720 half inch scale mapping.
- Review of Geological Survey of Ireland Mapping for study area.
- Review of the various County Development Plans.
- Review of various landscape publications.
- Review of various amenity, landscape and relevant material

The landscape and visual constraints are shown on Figures 21 to 23 (Drawings 00229/37 to 00229/39).

12.3 Existing Environment

General Character of the Constraints Study Area

Aalen et al., in the 'Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape' sets the N9 northern study area at the south-eastern corner of the Central Lowland Area, within a sub-classification known as the 'Southern Hill and Vale Area'. Being close to the upland 'Caledonian Province of the south-east', the overall landscape falls westward and southward and is interrupted by a number of detached hill and mountain blocks. These upland areas tend to appear more as hills in Kildare and Carlow gradually becoming more isolated and mountainous towards Laois and Kilkenny, e.g. Castlecomer Plateau and Slieve Ardagh Hills. The study area includes the lowland Barrow River Valley together with the lower slopes of both the east Wicklow Hills and the central Castlecomer Plateau. As such, the study area falls into one principal character area with a small upland valley area along of the River Dinin along the N78 around Castlecomer:

Landscape Character Areas

Barrow River Valley

The landscape associated with the river valleys is typically low lying being generally under 100m. The Barrow Valley in particular, is broad and well drained, with a limestone substrata, which is characteristically fertile and well suited to a

range of agricultural uses. The influence of the river as a major transport waterway in the past has contributed to the quality of associated architecture of the riverside properties providing the base for numerous country houses, demesnes and estates. North and east of Athy, there are extensive areas of bog/peatland where much of the area is under coniferous plantation. South of Athy, the rich soil and sheltered nature of the valley contributed to the establishment of the large farms and the landscape is characterised by large fields with strongly tree - lined hedgerows and deciduous woodland belts and copses particularly along various stretches of the Barrow and Nore Rivers. While arable and pastoral farming dominate the area, stud farming is also important. The valleys are increasingly the setting for amenity use, not only water based (boating, fishing etc) but also including golf courses, equestrian centres, walking routes etc.

Due to the ease of passage and construction, the valleys are also the main transport and communication corridors with most main roads and the railways paralleling the linear waterway features. The Barrow was also previously an important river for commercial transport now equally important for tourist cruising.

The Castlecomer Plateau

The Castlecomer Plateau is a large area of upland lying between the river valleys of the Barrow and Nore. The area is almost circular, except where to the south-west where the plateau is cut away to form the Dinin River Valley.

The plateau rises steeply from the River Barrow and Nore valleys giving an escarpment type edge to the upland which lies generally at 200m. The surface of the plateau rises to several low peaks generally of 250-300m in height (337m highest) and much of the area is under pastoral agricultural use though extensive areas are under coniferous plantation. Historically, coal was extracted sporadically at dispersed locations but especially in the vicinity of Castlecomer and as a result, Colliery is a common place-name in the upland. Indeed coal extraction was once so important that at Moneenroe, north-east of Castlecomer, the Wandesforde family created a planned mining/small farming community on their estate. However, coal is no longer mined commercially on the plateau. Due to the suitability of local clays, there is an important brick manufacturing industry based in Castlecomer and limestone is quarried at various locations especially on the eastern escarpment face in the vicinity of Paulstown. The elevated nature of the area provides significant views over the adjoining lowland river valley landscape and the escarpment sides are a strong visually defining edge to the lowland valleys.

The study area excludes the uppermost plateau leaving only the sharply rising slopes to the east and south and the Upper Dinin river valley around Castlecomer.

12.4 Detailed Landscape and Visual Constraints

The landscape constraints in the study area are considered in terms of the following categories:

- National Landscape Designations or Listings
- County Landscape Designations or Listings
- Other areas of significant landscape value not directly designated or listed.

National Landscape Designations or Listings

In many instances these areas are also designated under the various categories within the appropriate statutory County Development Plans.

Areas of Outstanding Landscape

The only national assessment of landscape quality published for Ireland is the 'Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes in Ireland', prepared by An Foras Forbartha in 1977. Many of the areas highlighted in the Inventory were subsequently given protection within the statutory County Developments Plan and these plans in many instances designate additional areas. These areas are identified in Table 12.1.

Areas of Scientific Interest (ASI)

The term ASI usually refers to either an ecological, geological or a geomorphological feature rated as being of International, National Regional or Local Importance. However, as they often relate to areas, which are also of amenity or scenic importance, their listing in the Areas of Scientific Interest in Ireland is also considered under landscape. Table 12.2 lists areas of Scientific Interest in each of the counties.

County Landscape Designations or Listings

In terms of landscape and visual issues each local authority uses differing designation nomenclature and as such the areas are set out on a county by county basis. Tables 12.3 to 12.7 presents the designations listed for Counties Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny and Wicklow respectively.

Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

A number of important landscapes are associated with the setting and surrounding of national monuments, estates and other features where the wider setting is an important constraint. Tables 12.8 to 12.12 present other areas of significant landscape value for Counties Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny and Wicklow respectively.

12.5 Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development

Towns, villages and residential density are highlighted given the likely high incidence of visual impact, which would potentially arise. Tables 12.13 to 12.17 present the towns, villages and areas with density of residential development for the Counties of Kildare, Laois, Carlow and Wicklow respectively.

12.6 General Aspects

Additional landscape and visual constraints relating to the entire study area include:

- General residential property.
- Local amenity areas such as for walking and fishing areas, pitch & putt courses, camping and caravan centres, equestrian centres etc.
- River (and canal) corridors.
- Historic demesnes and estates.
- Upland or elevated areas.
- Cultural landscapes.

12.7 References

The following sources and references were used in the preparation of the landscape and visual aspects of the report:

Aalen, F.H.A., Whelan, K., and Stout, M. Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape, 1997.

An Foras Forbartha: Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes in Ireland, 1977.

An Foras Forbartha: Areas of Scientific Importance in Ireland, 1977.

Carlow County Development Plan 1997.

Countryside Commission UK: Environmental Assessment - The Treatment of Landscape and Countryside Issues, 1991.

EPA: Advice Notes On Current Practice (in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements), 1995.

EPA: Guidelines On Information To Be Contained In Environmental Impact Statements, 1995.

Harbison, P. Guide to the National and Historic Monuments of Ireland, 1992.

Kildare County Development Plan, 1999.

Kilkenny County Development Plan (Draft), 2000.

Laois County Development Plan 2000.

Various amenity and landscape publications and information relating to the local and regional environment.

Wicklow County Development Plan, 1999.

Table 12.1 : Areas of Outstanding Landscape

Number	Description
No. 29	Running from Oakpark House in Co. Carlow and following the Barrow Valley in Counties Carlow and Kilkenny (10470ha) S720 820 to S725 780 and S695 737 to S690 587
No. 44	Kilderry – (6km NE of Kilkenny City) – 640ha of Plateau edge with views of Kilkenny City S565 600.

Table 12.2 : Areas of Scientific Importance**County Kildare**

Number / Grid	Name	Description
ASI 13 N804 051	Carrighill Quarry	Of Local geological interest. Located off N78, SW of Kilcullen.

County Laois

Number / Grid	Name	Description
ASI 15 S670 880	Ballylynan	Grassland of Local ecological interest.
ASI 16 S 703	Barrow Valley at Tankardstown Bridge	Grassland of Local ecological interest.

County Carlow

Number / Grid	Name	Description
ASI 3 S720 620	Bagenalstown Esker	Grassland of regional geomorphological / ecological interest.
ASI 11 S700 690	Cloughristick Wood	Woodland of local interest
ASI 13 S740 800	Oakpark	Lake woodland of local interest

Table 12.2 : Areas of Scientific Importance (continued)**County Kilkenny**

Number / Grid	Name	Description
ASI 2 S509 650	Dunmore Cave	Of National geomorphological interest
ASI 14 S460 620	Ardaloo Fen	Of Local ecological importance
ASI 16 S540 755 S540 720	Castlecomer Estate	Of Local ecological importance

County Wicklow

Number / Grid	Name	Description
ASI 30 S810 940	Ballycore Rath	Grassland of local Interest

Table 12.3 : County Kildare – Landscape Designations or Listings*Areas of High Amenity*

A3 The Valley of the River Barrow N635 070 to S720 820.

Areas of Scenic Interest - Trees and Woodlands and Historic Landscapes

Number	Name	Description
T.W 8 S750 885	Kilkea Demesne	Trees & Woodland of high amenity value of local importance.
T.W 9 S725 980	Moat of Ardscull	Trees of high amenity value of regional importance.
T.W 13 S780 847	Castledermot Avenue of trees to Church	Trees of high amenity value of local importance.

Areas of Scientific Interest

Apart from the area noted under the National Listing for Kildare (i.e. Nr 13, (listed as SI 14 in the Dev. Plan)), the Kildare Development Plan also lists the following references.

Number / Grid	Name	Description
S25 / S705 885	Tankardstown Marsh	Ecological interest. Located on the River Barrow, SE of Athy.

Views and Prospects

- Nr 2 Views of River Barrow from bridges, adjacent lands and roads:
- Greese Bridge – Jerusalem / Newtownpilsworth S715 830.
 - Maganey Bridge – Maganey. S715 847.
 - Bert Bridge – Tyrellstown S658 968.
 - Tankardstown Bridge – Grangemellon S707 880.
- Nr 3 Views to and from all bridges on Grand Canal:
- Milltown Bridge – Milltown, NW of Athy S655 974.

Views and Prospects from Roads

- 5 N78 Motorway interchange to south of Moortown House – Views of Old Kilcullen N825 065.
- 6 N9 Motorway interchange to Halverstown Cross Roads – Views to the east of Yellowbog Common N835 065.
- 9 N78 Russelstown Cross Road to Kilmead – Views of moat and Ardschull S725 980.
- 25 County Roads from Carrigeen to Sherrifhill cross-roads – Views to and from Corballis S815 870.
- 28 L397 Road from Pinhill Cross Roads to Burton Cross Roads – Views across the Barrow Valley S745 955.
- 29 N78 South of Moortown Hose to Tipeenan Lower – View north west of Plains of Kildare N795 050.
- 41 Views from N78 Moortowncastle to Knockbounce – Views of Dun Aillinne S820 080.

Table 12.4 : County Laois - Landscape Designations or Listings.

Areas of Special Development Control

Elevated lands south-south-east of Newtown S590 767.

Recreation and Tourism

No relevant references.

Views and Prospects

V1 Rossmore to Killeshin Road – 4km west of Carlow Town S650 760.

Trees and Woodland for Preservation

No relevant references.

Table 12.5 : County Carlow - Landscape Designations or Listings*Areas of Special Development Control*

A single square undefined area lies east of Carlow Town, See Map No. 4 of Development Plan.

Areas of High Amenity

River Barrow Valley through Study Area S720 820 to S695 58
Eastern edge of Castlecomer Plateau around Old Leighlin S655 670.

Areas of Local Natural Interest

- NI 1 Part of Oakpark Estate S740 800.
- NI 2 Part of Russellstown Wood S785 785.
- NI 3 East bank of Barrow from Milford Mills South S700 690.
- NI 4 East of Minor Road from Dunleckney to Ballymoon S720 620.

Views and Prospects

- A2 Barrow Valley from Newacre, north of Carlow Town to Barrowmount, south of Goresbridge S645 685.
- A9 Unreferenced View East of Carlow Town, See Map Nr 4 of Development Plan.
- A11 Milford Bridge Area – On River Barrow, off N9 between Carlow and Bagnalstown S695 695.
- A13 Mount Leinster and Blackstairs on N9 S705 675.

Trees and Woodland for Preservation

No relevant references.

Tourism and Amenity

With respect to recreation and tourism the following areas are identified in particular in the Development Plan:

- The Barrow Valley, especially south of Carlow Town and including the Barrow Way Marked Walk
- Old Leighlin and Leighlinbridge

- Castlecomer Plateau
- Browneshill Dolmen

Table 12.6 : County Kilkenny - Landscape Designations or Listings

Areas of Special Development Control / Areas of High Amenity

- 2 Part of area with lands bounded by roads nos. 119, 137, 146, 122 & 96. S475 595
- 3 Castlecomer Demesne S540 740
- 4 Jenkinstown Park. S490 645
- 6 Part of area bounded by road nos. 217, 283 & 281 S530 640

Views to be Preserved and Protected

- A11 View east into the Barrow Valley and lowland plains on the Castlecomer / Paulstown Rd. no. 201 and from road nos. 248 and 218 between the junction at road nos. 201 and 218 and the junction at road numbers 248 and 209. S640 600
- A13 View west over Kilkenny City from Ballysallagh / Kanesbridge Rd. no. 268 between the junctions with road nos. 210 and 252. S575 625

Tree Protection Orders

- T.P.O. 1/67 Sawney's Wood, Castlecomer S540 725
- T.P.O. 1/84 Keatingstown S480 600

Table 12.7 : County Wicklow - Landscape Designations or Listings

No relevant listings.

Table 12.8 : County Kildare - Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

Ardscull Motte, (S725 980) Large 12th Century Earthwork prominently located atop a hill north-east of Athy.
 Athy, and River Barrow Valley with country houses north and south of town (S655 980 to S690 920).
 Athy, Golf Course (OS 16S 700.955).
 Ballitore, Quaker Village & Griesemount House. (S795 960).
 Calverstown Desemne (N805 035).
 Castledermot Round Tower, Crosses and Church (S780 850). Also a one-time walled town.
 Dun Aillinne Hill-fort, (N820 080) Large fort, probably one time seat of Kings of Leinster, prominently located atop a hill north-west of Old Kilcullen.
 Kildangan Castle (N670 065).
 Kilkea Estate (OS 16S 75.88). House and castle
 Kilkea Forest Farm Lodge, Dollardstown, Leinster Lodge, Snugburrow (S730 900) & Woodlands.
 Kilkea, Mullaghreelan Hill, Woods and Amenity (S750 885).
 Kilmorony-Tankardstown, Barrow Valley (S705 855).

Knocknacree Hill (S800 815).
 Knockpatrick Hill (S815 855).
 Meganey-Carlow Barrow Valley (S720 848 to S720 790).
 Moone High Crosses and Church (S795 924).
 Mullamast Rath (S775 960). The one-time meeting place of Leinster Council and site of murder of some 400 people in 1577, located atop a hill west of Ballitore.
 Nine Tree Hill (S785 970).
 Old Kilcullen, High Crosses and Round Tower (N830 070). Also site of a monastery founded by St. Patrick and was previously a walled town.

Table 12.9 : County Laois - Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

Barrow River Valley south of Athy (S705 855).
 Ballylehane-Gales-Turra Uplands (S620 820).
 Boley-Kilfeacle Uplands (S600 857).
 Cooperhill Demesne (S675 810).
 Kilmorony-Tankardstown, Barrow Valley (S705 855).
 Various wooded River Valleys facing north on rising ground south-west of N80.

Table 12.10 : County Carlow - Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

Barrow Valley south of Muinebheag (S693 600).
 Dunleckney, east of Muinebheag (OS720 630).
 Carlow Golf Course (S745 785).
 Johnstown east of Carlow Town (S770 765).
 Milford Bridge and south along River (S700 700).
 Oakpark House (S735 800) Large wooded estate now an Agricultural Research Centre.
 Old Leighlin (S660 655) Site of 7th century monastery, 12th century cathedral, ancient cross and well, all in attractive hill side setting.
 Russellstown (S785 785).

Table 12.11 : County Kilkenny - Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

Castlecomer, around Golf Course & Swaney's Wood (S540 720).
 Dunmore Cave, (S515 650) Large cave complex with interpretative center and museum. Major historic location and site of mass murder by Vikings in year 928.
 Freestone Hill and Uplands (S590 570).
 Jenkinstown Amenity Area (S485 640).
 Kilkenny City, castle, cathedral, churches, round tower, houses and historic city, (S510 560) Attractive town with good medieval character numerous monuments and a major tourist location.

 Kilkenny, Country houses north of town along River Nore and at meeting with Dinin River (S495 600).
 Kilkenny Golf Course and adjoining amenities. (S515 590)
 Shankill Demesne (S665 595).

Table 12.12 : County Wicklow - Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

No relevant listings.

Table 12.13 : County Kildare – Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development*Towns and Villages:*

- Athy
- Ballitore
- Castledermot
- Kildangan
- Kilmead
- Maganey
- Moone
- Narraghmore
- Timolin
- Old Kilcullen

Density of Development:

- Ribbon development, approx. 5km south-west of Kildare town, on roads between Silliothill and Oghill (N690 100).
- Clooney (N645 020).
- Kilberry, approx. 5km north of Athy (S660 995).
- Ribbon development, approx. 9km south-west of Kilcullen, on roads between Calverstown and Ballybarney (N800 040).
- Around Fontstown Cross north-east of Kilmead (N750 010).
- Along N78 at Ballyshannon Cross (N790 040).
- At Kilgowan Cross (N825 035).
- At Ballyadams (S760 990).
- North of Inch (S973 960).
- Mullamast Cross (S770 948).
- Ballyroe Cross – Snugburrow (S720 907).
- Kilkea (S748 890).
- Boltonhill Cross (S780 900).
- Knockaphuca (S795 855).
- Prumpelstown Cross (S768 824).
- At County Boundary with Carlow around Knockbane (S770 805).

Table 12.14 : County Laois – Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development*Towns and Villages:*

- Ballylynan
- Ballinamoyler
- Carlow Environs

Density of Development:

- Ribbon development, approx. 3km north-west of Carlow town, on roads between Shanvally and Clonmore. (S680 780)
- At Arless along N80 2km north-west of Ballinamoyler. (S660 830)
- At Castletown along N80. (S645 855)
- At Killygranard N78 2km north of Ballylinan. (S655 900)
- At Parkahough. (S625 905)
- Along N78 / R430 around Newtown Cross. (S600 800)
- Ribbon development, approx. 2km west of Carlow town, on roads between Monure and Rossmore Bridge. (S695 760)

Table 12.15 : County Carlow - Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development

Towns and Villages:

- Muinebheag
- Carlow Town
- Leighlinbridge
- Old Leighlin
- Nurney

Density of Development:

- East of Carlow near Johnstown along R726.
- Ashaine Cross east of Carlow Town
- Castletown Cross south-east of Carlow Town. (S765 715)
- Along minor road at Ballycarney, south of Carlow Town
- Around Milford Bridge
- At Raheendoran, Killeshal and Fonthill, north-west of Milford Bridge. (S685 715)
- The Harrow. (S715 670)
- Donore. (S715 600)

Table 12.16 : County Kilkenny - Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development

Towns and Villages:

- Castlecomer
- Clogh
- Kilkenny City and environs
- Moneenroe
- Paulstown

Density of Development:

- Ribbon development, approx. 5km north-east of Castlecomer on roads in area between Cloughvillage, Crettyardf, Coolbaun and Massford Bridge. (S570 770)
- Along minor road between Dunmore Cave and Kilkenny Town. (S515 620)
- Ardaloo. (S475 635)
- Along N78 1km north-west of Dunmore Cave. (S505 660)
- North of Esker near junction of Rivers Gloschia and Dinin. (S505 675)
- Along minor road at Charterschool 2km north-east of Kilkenny Town. (S525 575)
- Along minor road 2km south-west of Shankill Demesne. (S635 580)

Table 12.17 : County Wicklow - Towns, Villages and Density of Residential Development

None.