

12. Landscape and Visual.

12.1 Introduction

This section of the report describes the major landscape and visual constraints for the southern section of the N9 corridor constraints study area, which includes parts of two counties, Carlow and Kilkenny.

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 constraints study area.
- Review of the various County Development Plans.
 - Review of various landscape publications.
 - Review of various amenity, landscape and relevant material

References are listed at the end of this section of the report.

12.3 Existing Environment

12.3.1 General Character of the Constraints study area

The 'Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape'¹ identifies the southern study area at the south-eastern corner of the Central Lowland Area, within a sub-classification known as the 'Southern Hill and Vale Area'. The study area is close to the upland 'Caledonian Province of the south-east', where the overall landscape falls westward and southward and is interrupted by a number of detached hill and mountain blocks.

The southern section study area tends to have an elevated or upland edge with wide lowland river valleys through the centre, all of which falls into 2 distinct character areas:

- The Lowland river valleys of the Barrow, Nore and Suir
- The South Kilkenny Hill Area

12.3.2 Landscape Character Areas

Barrow, Nore and Suir River Valleys

The landscape associated with the river valleys is typically low lying being generally under 100m. The land south of Kilkenny City is generally flat to gently undulating in character and rises up to the South Kilkenny Hills south of Thomastown. The Barrow Valley in particular, is broad (as it combines with the Slaney Valley to the east) and well drained with a limestone substrata which is characteristically fertile and well suited to a range of agricultural and horticultural uses. The influence of the river Barrow 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.

The Nore Valley between Bennetsbridge and Inistiogue is an area with a rich agricultural heritage and this is reflected in the size and frequency of long established large estates spread throughout this area. The impact of these estates has left the area with a strong landscape character of open parkland and scenic views. The Suir Valley close to Waterford City is a wide fertile valley and has a traditionally been associated with dairying and more recently with fruit and horticultural nursery stock production.

South Kilkenny Hills

The South Kilkenny Hills appear as a continuation of the Comeragh and Blackstair Mountains and are divided by the Barrow, Nore and Suir river valleys. Most of the high areas and the narrow steep sided valleys of the Barrow and Nore have been excluded from the Constraints study area as part of the Major Constraints phase.

12.4 Detailed Landscape and Visual Constraints

The landscape constraints in the constraints study area may be considered in terms of the following:

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

12.4.1 National Landscape Designations or Listings

These areas are also designated under various categories within the appropriate statutory County Development Plans.

Areas of Outstanding Landscape

The following areas were identified in the 'Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes in Ireland'², as being within the constraints study area:

Number	Description
29	Barrow Valley from Paulstown to south of Goresbridge
78	River Nore from Thomastown south

These areas are shown on Figures 9A and 9B.

Areas of Scientific Interest

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. Many other ASI have been re-designated as either Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA). Such areas are considered under Flora and Fauna and as such, are not detailed here.

County Carlow has no relevant references. County Killkenny areas are listed in Table 1 Appendix F. These areas are shown on Figures 9A and 9B

12.4.2 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 a county by county basis.

County Carlow

Areas of Special Development Control

No relevant references

Areas of High Amenity

River Barrow Valley through Constraints study area

Areas of Local Natural Interest

No relevant references

Views to be Preserved or Improved

Table 2 Appendix F lists the area identified. The area is presented on Figures 9A and 9B.

Trees and Woodland for Preservation

No relevant references

County Kilkenny

Areas of Special Development Control / Areas of High Amenity

Table 3 Appendix F lists the areas identified. The areas are presented on Figures 9A and 9B.

Views to be Preserved and Protected

Table 4 Appendix F lists the areas identified. The areas are presented on Figures 9A and 9B.

Tree Protection Orders

No relevant references

12.4.3 Other Areas of Significant Landscape Value

This sets out a number of important landscapes associated with the setting and surrounding of national monuments, estates and other features where the wider setting is an important constraint.

County Carlow

Table 5 Appendix F lists the other areas of significant landscape value. The areas are shown on Figures 9A and 9B.

County Kilkenny

Table 6 Appendix F lists the other areas of significant landscape value. The areas are shown on Figures 9A and 9B.

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. The areas are also shown on Figures 9A and 9B.

12.5.1 County Carlow

Towns and Villages:

Parts of Goresbridge was the only town identified within the southern section study area.

Density of Development:

Density of development areas are listed in Table 7 Appendix F.

12.5.2 County Kilkenny

Towns and Villages:

Towns and villages are listed in Table 8 Appendix F.

Density of Development:

Density of development areas are listed in Table 9 Appendix F.

12.6 General Aspects

Additional landscape and visual constraints relating to the 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 (& canal) corridors,
- Historic demesnes and estates,
- Upland or elevated areas
- Cultural landscapes

12.7 References:

1. Aalen, F.H.A., Whelan, K., and Stout, M. Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape, 1997
2. An Foras Forbartha: Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes in Ireland, 1977
3. An Foras Forbartha: Areas of Scientific Importance in Ireland, 1977
4. Carlow County Development Plan 1997
5. Countryside Commission UK: Environmental Assessment - The Treatment of Landscape and Countryside Issues, 1991
6. EPA: Advice Notes On Current Practice (in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements), 1995
7. EPA: Guidelines On Information To Be Contained In Environmental Impact Statements, 1995
8. Harbison, P. Guide to National and Historic Monuments in Ireland, 1992
9. Kilkenny County Development Plan, 2000
10. Various amenity and landscape publications and information relating to the local and regional environment.