

## 13 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

### 13.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed Carlingford Ferry development on the landscape and visual resources of Greenore and Greencastle area and their environs.

This chapter seeks to:

#### a) Establish the baseline conditions

Record and analyse the existing character, quality and sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource. This should include elements of the landscape such as:

- the landform;
- the land cover including the vegetation, the slopes, drainage, etc;
- the landscape character;
- current landscape designations and planning policies; and
- the site visibility (short, medium and long distance views).

#### b) Analyse baseline conditions

Comment on the scale, character, condition and the importance of the baseline landscape, its sensitivity to change and the enhancement potential where possible.

A visual analysis (illustrated by photographic material) describing characteristics which may be of relevance to the impact of the design and to the method of mitigation.

#### c) Describe the development

#### d) Identify the Impacts of the Development on the Landscape and Visual Resource

Identify the landscape and visual impacts of the development at different stages of its life cycle, including:

- Direct & indirect *landscape impacts* of the development on the landscape of the site and the surrounding area;
- *Visual impacts* including the extent of potential visibility, the view and viewers effected, the degree of visual intrusion, the distance of views and resultant impacts upon the character and quality of views.

Assess the significance of the landscape and visual impacts in terms of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource, including the nature and magnitude of the impact.

Detail measures proposed to mitigate significant residual detrimental landscape and visual impacts and assess their effectiveness.

Assess the ability of the landscape and visual resource to absorb the proposed development.

Identify any positive benefits.

## 13.2 Methodology

### 13.2.1 Introduction

The methods used in this assessment have been developed by RPS and are derived from the DoEHLG "Landscape and Landscape Assessment" June 2000 and the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2002. The documents recommend baseline studies to describe, classify and evaluate the existing landscape and visual resource focusing on its sensitivity and ability to accommodate change. The guidelines are not intended as a prescriptive set of rules but rather offer best practice methods and techniques of LVIA. The existing landscape and visual context of the study area was established through a

process of desktop study, site survey work and photographic surveys. The proposal was then applied to the baseline conditions to allow the identification of potential impacts, prediction of their magnitude and assessment of their significance. Mitigation can then be identified to reduce as far as possible any residual potential landscape and visual impacts.

### 13.2.2 Assessment Criteria and Terminology

#### ***Landscape Assessment Criteria and Terminology***

The study area has been divided into landscape character areas. Each landscape character area has been assessed in terms of *value*, *quality* and *sensitivity to change* of the type proposed by this development. In this section the key criteria and terminology used for the landscape assessment are described.

#### ***Landscape Quality***

For the purpose of this assessment, landscape quality is categorised as:

- *Exceptional Quality*: Areas of especially high quality acknowledged through designation as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other landscape based sensitive areas. A landscape significant within the wider region or nationally.
- *High Quality*: Areas that have a very strong positive character with valued and consistent distinctive features that give the landscape unity, richness and harmony. A landscape significant within the district.
- *Medium Quality*: Areas that exhibit positive character but which may have evidence of alteration/degradation or erosion of features resulting in a less distinctive landscape. May be of some local landscape significance with some positive recognisable structure.
- *Low Quality*: Areas that are generally negative in character, degraded and in poor condition. No distinctive positive characteristics and with little or no structure. Scope for positive enhancement.

#### ***Landscape Sensitivity***

Landscape sensitivity to the type of development proposed is defined as follows:

- *High Sensitivity*: High visual quality landscape with highly valued or unique characteristics susceptible to relatively small changes.
- *Medium Sensitivity*: Medium visual quality landscape with moderately valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes.
- *Low Sensitivity*: Low visual quality landscape with common characteristics capable of absorbing substantial change.

#### ***Magnitude of Landscape Resource Change***

Direct resource changes on the landscape character of the study area is brought about by the introduction of the proposal and its effects on the key landscape characteristics. The following categories and criteria have been used:

- *High magnitude*: Total loss or alteration to key elements of the landscape character which result in fundamental and / or permanent long-term change.
- *Medium magnitude*: Partial or noticeable loss of elements of the landscape character and / or medium-term change.
- *Low magnitude*: Minor alteration to elements of the landscape character and / or short-term/ temporary change.
- *No Change*: No change to landscape character.

### **Significance of Landscape Impact**

The level of significance of effect on landscape is a product of landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of alteration in landscape resource. Where landscape sensitivity has been predicted as high and the magnitude of change as high or medium the resultant impact will be significant in terms of EIA Regulations. This is illustrated in Table 13.1 below.

**Table 13.1: Significance of Landscape Impact**

<b>Magnitude of Landscape resource change</b>	<b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
No change	No change	No change	No change
Low	Slight	Slight / moderate	Moderate
Medium	Slight / moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Substantial
High	Moderate	Moderate / Substantial	Substantial

### **Landscape Assessment Definitions**

- *Landscape Resource*: The combination of elements that contribute to landscape context, character and value.
- *Landscape Value*: The relative value or importance attached to a landscape that expresses national or local consensus because of intrinsic characteristics.
- *Landscape Character*: The distinct and homogenous pattern that occurs in the landscape reflecting geology, landform, soils, vegetation and man's impact

### **Visual Assessment Criteria and Terminology**

The following text describes the key criteria and terminology used in the visual assessment.

#### **Viewer Sensitivity**

Viewer sensitivity is a combination of the sensitivity of the human receptor (i.e. resident; commuter, tourist; walker; recreationist, or worker) and viewpoint type or location (i.e. house, workplace, leisure venue, local beauty spot, scenic viewpoint, commuter route, tourist route or walkers' route).

Sensitivity can be defined as follows:

- *High sensitivity*: e.g. users of an outdoor recreation feature which focuses on the landscape; valued views enjoyed by the community; tourist visitors to scenic viewpoint.
- *Medium sensitivity*: e.g. users of outdoor sport or recreation which does not offer or focus attention on landscape; tourist travellers.
- *Low sensitivity*: e.g. regular commuters, people at place of work (excluding outdoor recreation).

#### **Magnitude of Visual Resource Change**

The magnitude of alteration in visual resource or amenity results from the scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in the view composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development. Distance and duration of view must be considered. Other vertical features in the landscape and the backdrop to the development will all influence the magnitude of visual resource change. This can be defined as follows:

- *High magnitude:* Where changes to the view significantly alter (negative or beneficial) the overall scene or cause some alteration to the view for a significant length of time.
- *Medium magnitude:* Where some changes occur (negative or beneficial) in the view, but not for a substantial part of the view or for a substantial length of time.
- *Low magnitude:* Where only a minor alteration to the view occurs (negative or beneficial) not for a significant length of time.
- *No change:* No discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

**Significance of Visual Impact**

Significance of visual impact is defined on a project-by-project basis. The principal criteria for determining significance are magnitude and sensitivity of the receptor. A higher level of significance is generally attached to large scale or substantial effects on sensitive receptors.

Where visual sensitivity has been predicted as high or medium, and the magnitude of change as high, the resultant impact will be significant. Where the magnitude of change has been predicted as high and the visual sensitivity has been predicted as high or medium then the resultant impact will be significant in terms of EIA Regulations.

Table 13.2 illustrates significance of visual impact as a correlation between viewer sensitivity and visual resource change magnitude.

**Table 13.2: Significance of Visual Impact**

Magnitude of Landscape resource change	Visual Sensitivity		
	Low	Medium	High
No change	No change	No change	No change
Low	Slight	Slight / moderate	Moderate
Medium	Slight / moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Substantial
High	Moderate	Moderate / Substantial	Substantial

Positive effects upon receptors may also result from a change to the view. These may be through the removal of negative features or visual detractors, or through the addition of well designed elements, which add to the visual experience in a complementary, positive and stimulating manner.

**Visual Assessment Definitions**

- *Visual Quality:* Although the interpretation of viewers’ experience can have preferential and subjective components, there is generally clear public agreement that the visual resources of certain landscapes have high visual quality. The visual quality of a landscape will reflect the physical state of the repair of individual features or elements.
- *Visual Resources:* The visual resources of the landscape are the stimuli upon which actual visual experience is based. They are a combination of visual character and visual quality.
- *Visual Character:* When a viewer experiences the visual environment, it is not observed as one aspect at a time, but rather as an integrated whole. The viewer’s visual understanding of an area is based on the visual character of elements and aspects and the relationships between them.

**Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)**

The ZVI is the area within which views of the site and/or the development can be obtained. The extent of the ZVI is determined primarily by the topography of the area. The ZVI is then refined by field studies to indicate

where relevant forestry, woodlands, hedges or other local features obscure visibility from the main roads, local viewpoints/landmarks and/or significant settlements.

Using terrain-modelling techniques combined with the proposed development specification, a map is created showing areas from where the proposed development would in theory be seen. A worst case scenario is taken in line with Landscape Institute guidelines.

The actual visual impacts within the ZVI have been described in later sections of this chapter. The ZVI for the proposal is illustrated in Figure 13.1.

### ***Photomontages***

Photomontages have been prepared for selected representative viewpoints at locations illustrated in Figure 13.4 and are provided in Appendix 13.1.

Viewpoints are chosen from locations where the proposed development will be potentially visible. The points are chosen to give a representative sample of views of the proposal within the landscape. Viewpoints frequented by members of the public such as public rights of way, car parks and popular viewpoints are usually chosen, along with views from nearby settlements.

Photomontages from each viewpoint location are taken covering an arc of view matching that of the visual extent of the development

All photographs are taken with a slow speed film (c. 100 ASA), a camera aperture of 50 mm and a professional tripod for true horizontal alignment. A record is taken of the light conditions and visibility conditions, the camera height above ground, time of day, viewpoint coordinates recorded to the nearest metre using GPS and the bearing of each photograph.

The viewpoints have been selected to reflect typical views obtained of the proposal, using the parameters of distance and direction of view.

## **13.3 Receiving Environment**

### **13.3.1 Scale and Character**

#### ***Landscape Character***

The landscape character of Carlingford Lough has been created by the primary influence of the extensive glaciation of the granite rocks from which the landscape is mainly formed. In broad terms the study area extends from rounded mountains to the north and south of the Lough gradually sloping to Carlingford Lough and the Irish Sea. The long ridges and smooth profiles of the hills and mountains are a legacy of this period in Ireland's history, and subsequent vegetation cover has not obscured this wide and open landscape. Mountain ridgelines largely run in a north-west to south east alignment. Settlements have developed in the more fertile valley bottoms, and sheltered bays, but in general today this is not a highly populated area, and in areas above 100 m there is little evidence of recent habitation. The main land use is extensive beef & sheep grazing on the hill slopes, which influences the vegetation types and contributes to the significant feeling of wilderness to be found in the uplands. The coastal areas consist of a gently undulating landscape with extensive small bays and inlets characteristic of this part of the Irish Coast. These bays and inlets extend inland from rocky promontories along the rugged coastline that form peninsulas. Residential development is much more frequent with proximity to the coast but is generally restricted to close proximity to the road network.

For the purpose of this assessment the study area is contained within the ZVI illustrated in Figure 13.1. Locations outside the ZVI have been visited and no significant landscape and visual impacts are predicted.

The landscape character of the study area can be described by use of distinctive landscape character areas as follows:

- Open Upland Hills and Mountains
- Greenore Urban Landscape
- Coastal Hills and Bays

The landscape character of the study area is outlined in Figure 13.2.

***Open Upland Hills and Mountains:***

The Mourne and Carlingford Mountains dominate the study area and are the most significant component of both the landscape and visual resource of the proposed site's environs. The higher hills and mountains define the northern and eastern visibility of the proposals as viewed from the surrounding landscape. Scattered tracts of small belts of forestry occur throughout this landscape significantly affecting the extent of views across the predominantly open landscape character. Housing is scarce within this upland landscape but occasional white painted cottages are visible on steep side slopes. The mountains' predominant land cover is peat moorland with field boundaries rare. Stonewalls are used where necessary to define landownership. The Open Upland Hills and Mountains Landscape Character Area has a high sensitivity to change.

***Greenore Urban Landscape:***

Greenore village is located approximately 3.5km south-east of Carlingford village, on a peninsula that projects out into Carlingford Lough that is dominated by harbour and port related activities. The harbour industry has grown significantly in modern times and Greenore is one of the most important ports on the Irish Sea Coast. This is exhibited visually by the large ships and boats that use the port as well as by the support services necessary for the port housed in large industrial style units. The harbour has a busy (working) appearance constantly on the move. Tall mast lighting and yellow cranes are prominent and visible from the wider landscape. A large number of HGV's transport containers across north and south Ireland and are visually and audibly prominent on local roads. The Greenore Urban Landscape Character Area has a low sensitivity to change.

***Coastal Hills and Bays:***

Between the mountains and the Irish Sea the landscape consists of rounded and rocky low hills that are located on peninsulas that are frequent on the coastline of Louth and Down. The lower lying hills influence the visibility of the higher hills of Carlingford and Mourne Mountains as viewed from the surrounding landscape. Sporadic, conspicuous housing is found in this landscape mostly associated with roads. The dominant land use is beef/sheep grazing that takes place on largely wet rush grasslands with frequent rock outcrops. A series of bays consist of broad flat estuaries within Carlingford Lough and shingle and sandy beaches facing towards the Irish Sea on both sides of the Lough. The estuaries are used for shellfish farms and wire cages are a conspicuous feature between Carlingford and Greenore. The Coastal Hill and Bays Landscape Character Area has a medium sensitivity to change.

***Visual Character:***

The landscape of the study area is predominantly open and expansive. However, occasional blocks of forestry plantation and built development have created artificial boundaries and block distant views. Views are further restricted by undulations in the topography of the landscape between the mountains and the coast that create enclosed pockets of landscape. Extensive views across the coastal lowlands are available from the mountains. A network of small lanes and county roads interweave across the landscape between the coast and mountains. Where such roads cross the low rounded hills long to medium distance views are available. Overall the focus of views is towards Carlingford Lough and its associated bays as well as along the rocky Louth and Down coastlines.

The R176 in County Louth is the main road between Carlingford and Greenore and will not provide any views of the proposal due to the screening effect of the Greenore industrial buildings and existing vegetation. The A2 in County Down provides remote viewpoints from the northern side of Carlingford Lough, towards Greencastle and Greenore.

### **13.3.2 Planning Designations**

***Louth County Development Plan 2009 – 2015***

The Louth County Development Plan relates to the administrative area of County Louth, excluding the municipal areas of Dundalk Town Council, Drogheda Borough Council.

Chapter 6 of the Plan relates to Tourism, Recreation and Amenity including the designations and proposals relating to landscape and visual amenity.

Within the Plan, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (A.O.N.B) has been designated to the north of the County, encompassing the Carlingford and Feede Mountains – this area lies directly to the west of the study

area (see Map 6.1 of Development Plan). The Plan notes that *“much of the area remains in its natural state covered in gorse, bracken and heather... Spectacular views are available from a number of vantage points over Carlingford Lough to the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland and over Dundalk Bay to central and south County Louth.”*

Furthermore with regards to the AONB, the Plan states that *“it is the objective of the council to protect the unspoiled natural environmental of areas of outstanding natural beauty for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.”*

The Plan designates an Area of High Scenic Quality (A.H.S.Q) that surrounds the Calingford and Feede Mountains AONB and lies to the west of the study area. The Plan states that such areas *“whilst not quite possessing the exceptional natural beauty and landscape quality of the A.O.N.Bs, nevertheless add significantly to the stock of natural scenic reserves within the county”*. Furthermore, the Plan states that *“it is the objective of the council to protect the unspoiled rural landscape of areas of high scenic quality by limiting development to that required to sustain the existing rural communities that reside there”*.

Table 6.4 of the Plan identifies Scenic Routes. The Plan states that it is an objective of the development plan *“to continue to protect views and prospects of special and amenity value... Consequently any development that would interfere with or adversely affect this objective shall not be permitted.”* There are two scenic routes in proximity to the proposed development namely SR14 Greenore – Carlingford- Omeath and SR15 Coast Road – Whitestown- Ballagan –Ballytrasna.

The Plan also highlights the need to *“protect open space from inappropriate development [and improve] local open spaces [that] provide essential visual breaks in built up areas, contribute to local amenity, [and] assist in nature conservation and are capable of meeting recreational and community needs”*.

A number of Views & Prospects of Special Amenity Value are designated within the Plan which notes the objective of the Plan to *“prevent development, that would block or otherwise interfere with a view or prospect, considered to be of special amenity value or interest and to preserve prominent landscapes of similar significance”*. Views and Prospects Plan ref. VP 5 Carlingford Lough, is designated just north of Carlingford, northwest of the new development is the closest view to the proposal.

### **Newry & Mourne District Rural Area Subject Plan 1986 – 1999**

The Newry & Mourne District Rural Area Subject Plan relates to the rural part of the District Council Area of Newry and Mourne; this includes the land north of Carlingford Lough (within Northern Ireland).

The Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Zone B extends southwards to the northern shoreline of Carlingford Lough. The Plan states that within Zone B *“there are distinct areas requiring strict control of development... this tends to be because of the scenic amenity, the physical and historical characteristics of the area and high levels of development pressure.”*

In relation to the A2 and Mourne Coast, the Plan states *“the A2 runs through an area of high scenic amenity and is an important main traffic and tourist route”*.

The Plan does not designate any views & prospects or viewing points.

### **Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (Draft August 2006)**

Currently the Draft Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 has not been adopted but it is reviewed here as it is still considered by Planning NI when assessing planning applications.

The proposed site at Greencastle lies within an area designated as the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposed site at Greencastle lies within an area designated as Mourne Countryside Policy Area (Plan Ref: NC06).

## **13.4 Project Description**

The proposed development is described in detail elsewhere in this ES/EIS (see Project Description Chapter 3). As such only a brief description is included within this section and only in relation to those project

elements that have potential to influence the landscape and visual impact assessment. The Carlingford Ferry project between Greencastle shoreline in Co. Down and Greenore Port in Co. Louth proposes to construct facilities at both sites to allow operation of a vehicular ferry crossing in the mouth of Carlingford Lough.

The proposal consists of the following elements:

- a reinforced concrete slipway with narrow jetty at Greencastle with parking and queuing area on land
- a reinforced concrete slipway at Greenore with parking and queuing area on land
- floating navigational markers
- localised upgrade and widening to parts of Greencastle Pier Road
- car ferry operating between the two slipways and across Carlingford Lough

Detailed plans of the proposals are provided elsewhere in the ES/EIS.

## 13.5 Landscape and Visual Impacts

### 13.5.1 Direct Landscape Character Impacts

The proposed coastline developments are located within/adjacent to two of the landscape character areas identified in the baseline assessment. The landscape impacts of the proposals have been summarised in the following text that should be read with Figure 13.2 Landscape Character Areas.

#### ***Open Upland Hills and Mountains:***

This landscape character area is not directly or indirectly affected by the proposal. This landscape is located at considerable distance from the proposed coastline developments. The landscape quality of this landscape has been identified as “Exceptional”.

This landscape character has been identified as having a high sensitivity. The predicted magnitude of change in landscape resource is no change. The predicted significance of landscape impact for the Open Hills and Mountains landscape is no change.

#### ***Greenore Urban Landscape:***

The proposed Carlingford ferry development is located to the east of the commercial quay at Greenore. The site is accessed through the existing Greenore Port entrance gates. There are frequent conspicuous urban features in this landscape which when combined with the presence of existing buildings similar to those proposed results in low levels of landscape resource change caused by the proposals. There are substantial buildings associated with port business already present adjacent to the application site. While the extent of port activities will slightly increase, the changes are all consistent with the characteristics of this landscape character area and only low levels of landscape resource will occur.

The landscape quality of this landscape has been identified as “low”.

This landscape character has been identified as having a low sensitivity. The predicted magnitude of change in landscape resource is medium. The predicted significance of landscape impact for the Greenore Urban Landscape is slight negative.

#### ***Coastal Hills and Bays:***

The proposed Carlingford ferry development is located on the southern side of Greencastle Pier Road approximately 600m south east of Greencastle Point. The proposed site is to the east of the main group of houses comprising Greencastle village but within an area that has linear development along the road. Incoming and outgoing traffic will not have to travel through the village to access the ferry development. Access to the site will be via a direct entrance off the Greencastle Pier Road and sufficient length of hedgerow will be removed and setback to provide adequate sight lines for traffic re-joining the road. Minor road improvements will slightly impact on the character of the Green Pier Road. Overall the proposals consist of similar features to those found along this section of coastline. The new development's influence over the Coastal Hills and Bays landscape will be restricted to the eastern Irish Sea coast as Greenore Point and intervening urban development prevent any landscape influence extending inland to Carlingford Lough.



The landscape quality of this landscape has been identified as “high”.

The landscape character has been identified as having a high sensitivity. The predicted magnitude of change in landscape resource is low. The predicted significance of landscape impact for Coastal Hills and Bays Landscape is moderate negative.

### 13.5.2 Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)

The anticipated ZVI for the proposal is illustrated in Figure 13.1. The ZVI for the proposal is extensive due to the low lying coastal location and the proximity of high mountains. However, due to the nature of the undulating topography and frequent rural housing at Greencastle and the built environment at Greenore at a local level the visibility of the proposal will be limited to within close distances. As will be described later although there will be long distance views from across the Lough and from Mountain tops and roads due the distance of these views and the limited nature of the proposals there will be no significant visual impacts from such views.

The actual visual impacts within the ZVI are described below.

### 13.5.3 Visual Impacts on Residential Properties

Residential properties that have potential views of the development, within the ZVI, have been identified and assessed in order to establish the level of visual impact. Figure 13.3 illustrates the predicted visual impact for the residential properties with a potential view of the proposed development. For Residual Impacts listed for each residential property please refer to Section 13.7 for more detail. At Greenore there are a large number of residential properties west of the golf course and along the road to Carlingford. However, the presence of numerous trees and houses in this landscape combined with the flat nature of the topography prevents any views to the proposals from such locations. Further, the proposed development is located on the east of substantial port buildings a characteristic that also restrict views from the north, west and south towards the proposed Greenore slipway. At Greenore it is only those properties that have views towards the shoreline that will have potential views of the proposals. On the Greencastle side of the Lough there is a long linear development of individual houses along the shore that all have potential views of the proposals to varying degrees. Those properties subject to visual impact assessment are identified in Figure 13.3.

Of a total of 66 properties are assessed at Greenore and Greencastle, 28 nr properties within the study area were assessed as having ‘No Change’, with 34 nr properties assessed as resulting in a ‘Slight Negative Visual Impact’, 2 nr properties are considered as having a ‘Moderate Negative Visual Impact’ with 2 nr properties immediately east and west of the proposal at Greencastle resulting in a ‘Substantial Negative Impact’. Table 13.3 below summarises the quantified visual impacts that are illustrated in Figure 13.3.

**Table 13.3: Summary of Visual Impact (without mitigation)**

Degree of Visual Impact	Number of properties
Substantial negative impact	2
Moderate negative impact	2
Slight negative impact	34
No change	28
Slight positive impact	0
Moderate positive impact	0
Substantial positive impact	0

### 13.5.4 Photomontages

The locations of all viewpoints are shown in Figure 13.4. It is important to note that it is difficult to obtain direct views of the proposed site and proposed development from the adjacent road network in County Louth and County Down due to the lowlying nature of the local landscape and the fact that the proposals are also low lying on the shoreline and not elevated in nature beyond the proposed light columns that are difficult to discern with distance. The viewpoints selected therefore provide a worst case visual assessment of the proposal. The photomontages for viewpoints 1-5 are illustrated in Appendix 13.1 and should be read with the following text.

**Viewpoint 1: View south east from Greencastle Pier Road (1)**

*Type and Sensitivity of receptor:* This view is predominantly available to tourists to Greencastle Castle and local residents. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing view:* The existing view is from a local road to Greencastle. Between the Lough and Greencastle Pier Road there is a visible strip of gardens of adjacent dwellings with rendered block walls and timber fences clearly marking their boundaries. If the viewer turned their head to the left they would see Greencastle Pier Road and a white rendered dwelling. The shoreline is obscured with the Lough dominating much of the view. On the horizon centrally in the Lough can be seen a light house and tower to the right hand side of the view.

*Predicted view:* From this view the pier will be directly visible. The pier will extend out from the left to right hand side of the view connected with horizontal concrete deck and railings. The tower in the Lough from this view will appear to the rear of the pier. The hard stand car parking area will not be seen from this viewpoint. The ferry will intermittently be located within the view as it travels back and forth between Greencastle and Greenore. Cars will be visible boarding and departing from the ferry. However boats and ships are a common feature of the Lough in views from this location. The proposed development will occupy a large amount of the view.

*Magnitude of change:* The magnitude of change in visual resource will be high.

*Significance of visual impact:* The predicted significance of visual impact will be substantial negative.

**Viewpoint 2: View south west from Greencastle Pier Road (2)**

*Type and Sensitivity of receptor:* This view is predominantly available to tourists to Greencastle Castle, and local residents. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing view:* The existing view is from a local road to Greencastle. Views are offered over Carlingford Lough to Greenore and Carlingford with Carlingford Mountains to the rear. The immediate foreground consists of is of an agricultural field but there is no view of the shoreline. A small island is visible on the left hand side in mid channel. The far shore line to the left hand side of the view the landscape is lowlying with scattered dwellings and clumps of trees. There are prominent white industrial buildings at Greenore on the opposite side of the Lough. The landscape rises dramatically beyond Greenore to rounded peaks that dominate the skyline. The shore line to the right of the view is scattered with white dwellings and coniferous trees to Carlingford on the right hand side of the view.

*Predicted view:* The proposed development will be seen directly from this view due to the proximity of the view to the site. The hardstand queuing area will dominate this view with vertical lighting columns breaking the skyline. There is a post and wire fence that will be seen bounding the site. From the hard stand area the jetty extends from the centre to the left hand side of the view with metal guard rails. The development proposal is prominent in the view due to the proximity of the viewpoint.

*Magnitude of change:* The magnitude of change in visual resource will be low. The majority of the view will remain unaffected.

*Significance of visual impact:* The predicted significance of visual impact is assessed as moderate negative.

**Viewpoint 3: View south from Greencastle Castle turret**

*Type and Sensitivity of receptor:* This view is available to visitors to Greencastle Castle. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing view:* This view is available from an elevated position in Greencastle Castle towards the development site. The view is panoramic in nature. The immediate landscape is of arable fields lined with stone walls and hedges that fall to the shore and Carlingford Lough. There is a single dwelling to the left hand side of the view. Just off centre in Carlingford Loughs' waters there is an island and a tower to the left hand side of the view. In the far distance the low lying shore of County Louth can be discerned against the skyline with residences and clumps of trees throughout.

*Predicted view:* From this elevated position the development at Greencastle will be directly visible in the view. Centrally the hard stand queuing area, portacabin and overhead lighting columns can be seen leading to the jetty protruding out above the shore and then dropping into Carlingford Lough. Black tubular piles, concrete platform and railings continue on the line of the jetty in to the Lough. Jetties and piers are familiar feature of the coastline. The ferry will be read with the frequent ships and other vessels travelling in Carlingford Lough. The view from the Castle to the shore has been previously compromised with urban development that is notable in all views towards the Lough. Cars are already a feature travelling back and forward along Greencastle Pier Road particularly in summer months. The proposals will be read in the context of this linear urban development along Greencastle Pier Road reducing potential visual impact magnitude. Overall the view to the Lough and beyond is maintained.

*Magnitude of change:* The magnitude of change in visual resource will be low.

*Significance of visual impact:* The predicted significance of visual impact is moderate negative.

#### **Viewpoint 4: View north from footway adjacent to Greenore shore (1)**

*Type and Sensitivity of receptor.* This view is predominantly available to tourists, day-trippers and local residents. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing view:* The view is from a footway at the edge of the Greenore shore. The immediate foreground view is essentially split into two parts. The left hand side of the view is urban comprising a road, open grass, street signs, street furniture, buildings, ornamental seaside planting and a footway bounded on its right hand side by a stone wall. On the right side of the view and the stone wall is a shore that leads to Carlingford Lough. Beyond Carlingford Lough the landscape rises quite dramatically to open upland hills with smooth sides and rounded peaks. The lower slopes are marked with a patchwork of agricultural fields. The shore has scattered buildings and trees in the landscape. Ships are a regular feature in this view travelling back and forth from Greenore Port and Warrenpoint Port.

*Predicted view:* From this view vertical piles and a portion of the slipway will be seen occupying the view. There will be a single over head lighting column seen to the right of an existing building. The development proposal will be noticeable but not prominent in the view. Cars and ships are a current feature of the existing view and there will be low change in visual resource when the proposal is applied to this baseline. The view along the shore and to the Lough beyond is maintained.

*Magnitude of change:* There is a magnitude of low change in visual resource.

*Significance of visual impact:* The predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate negative.

#### **Viewpoint 5: View north from footway adjacent to Greenore shore (2)**

*Type and Sensitivity of receptor.* This view is predominantly available to tourists, day-trippers and local residents. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing view:* The view is from the edge of the Greenore shore a little further along the shore line from Viewpoint 4. The immediate foreground of the view is occupied by shingle shore that leads to Carlingford Lough. Beyond Carlingford Lough the landscape rises quite dramatically to open upland hills with smooth sides and rounded peaks. The lower slopes are marked with a patchwork of agricultural fields. The shore has scattered buildings and trees in the landscape. Ships are a regular feature in this view travelling back and forth from Greenore Port and Warrenpoint Port. If the viewer turns their head to the left the extensive Greenore Port would be prominent in the view.

*Predicted view:* From this view vertical piles and a portion of the slipway will be seen occupying the view. The development proposal will be noticeable but not prominent in the view. Cars and ships are a current feature of the existing view and there will be low change in visual resource when the proposal is applied to this baseline. The view along the shore and to the Lough beyond is maintained.

*Magnitude of change:* There is a magnitude of low change in visual resource.

*Significance of visual impact:* The predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate negative.

### 13.5.5 Landscape Designations

#### Louth County Development Plan

As noted the Louth County Development Plan identifies the Carlingford – Greenore road (R176) as a Scenic Route. Furthermore, the Plan designates Views and Prospects VP 17 *Carlingford Lough* and VP16 *Carlingford Village and Dundalk Bay*. However, due to the nature of the topography and low levels of visual resource change it is not possible to view the shoreline proposals from either the designated Scenic Route or Views and Prospects and no significant visual impacts will occur for either protected view. Ships are a frequent feature of views from the Scenic Route and the Views and Prospects and the proposed ferry will be consistent with this baseline without significant visual impacts.

#### ***Newry & Mourne District Rural Area Subject Plan 1986 – 1999***

The Plan does not designate any views & prospects or viewing points. The Plan states that the proposal at Greencastle is located within the Mournes AONB.

#### ***Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (Draft August 2006)***

As with the 1986 – 1999 Plan the proposed site is identified within the Mournes AONB. The Mournes AONB is a designation that extends over an expansive area of uplands and coastland. The proposals occupy a very small proportion of the designation. Further the wider landscape within the AONB will not be influenced by the proposal at all due to the lowlying nature of the development and its limited scale. The proposals therefore have been designed sympathetically to the sensitive setting within the AONB. It could also be argued that the proposals are complimentary to the AONB as the new ferry will encourage more tourists to visit and explore the AONB. Overall due to the limited scale of the proposals and their lowlying aspect the proposed ferry development will not have a significant impact on the AOMN designation.

### 13.5.6 Construction Phase Impacts

During the construction phase potential impacts include:

- Site preparation/enabling works and operations
- Site infrastructure and access
- Vehicular and plant movements
- Dust emissions.

The construction phase is likely to be limited to 6 months and therefore landscape and visual impacts during the construction phase will be of a temporary nature. Ground level views of the proposals are largely screened by adjacent topography, houses (both sites) or industrial buildings (at Greenore) and vegetation due to the low-lying and flat nature of the sites. Improvement works of Greencastle Pier Road will cause temporary ground level disruption locally. Due to distance and the broad scale of the coastal and Lough character, the change in visual resource will be low, changes will be temporary in nature and therefore the significance of landscape and visual impacts during the construction stage will be slight at Greencastle. At Greenore the port landscape is robust and in a constant state of flux with development frequent and ships coming and going. The construction stage impacts at Greenore will therefore also be temporary in nature and only low in magnitude.

When viewed from the wider landscape the overall landscape and visual impacts during the construction phase will be slight due to limited viewer exposure and limited landscape resource change.

### 13.5.7 Cumulative Impacts

The landscape and visual impacts above have all been addressed both independently and with regards to any potential cumulative impacts resulting from potential interactions between the construction or operational phases of any ongoing developments, recently approved development and pre-application developments outlined in Chapter 3. Due to the small scale of the proposed Carlingford Ferry development and the distance from developments outlined in Chapter 3 no cumulative impacts on landscape and visual aspects are predicted.

### 13.6 Mitigation Measures

The visual impact of the proposal is caused by the appearance of new structures, and the ancillary works associated with such a development. The arrival of the ferry to the new slipways will result in transitory visual impacts.

The design evolution of the proposed project has undertaken to enable incorporation of the following mitigation measures:

- Sensitive use of local materials for constructed elements;
- Careful integration of constructed elements with existing elements such as existing roads and building sites;
- Appropriate materials and colour of fencing and buildings;
- Appropriate landscape planting to minimise visual impact;
- Directional lighting;
- General site housekeeping designed to minimise visual impact during construction stage.

It is proposed that all hedgerows removed as part of the road improvements on Greencastle Pier Road will be replaced with similar hedgerow as illustrated on the Landscape Planting plan that accompanies the planning application.

Planting of a woodland screen between the Greencastle site and adjacent properties was considered to address the significant visual impact predicted for the two properties at this location but it was felt that this would interfere with the residents views along the shore and Lough and was not proposed at this stage. If residents prefer woodland screen planting then this should be provided.

Good site design, use of an environmental management plan during the construction phase and incorporation of mitigation measures identified above will effectively mitigate the impact of ancillary works.

### 13.7 Residual Impacts

This section of the chapter assesses the impact of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual receptors (previously identified in Section 13.5 above), after the mitigation (described above in Section 13.6) has been implemented.

After the proposed planting along the Greencastle Pier Road has matured the roadside character will be returned throughout with no change in visual impact for dwellings along the road frontage.

Within the wider landscape the proposal will continue to blend with existing ship and boat uses and the slipways will remain no prominent in the wider landscape with significant residual landscape character impacts.

With regards to visual impact on sensitive receptors loss of existing views will partly remain for two properties in very close proximity but overall the visual impacts at dwellings are significantly reduced and the proposals will become a recognised feature of the local visual context. The predicted residual visual impacts for all properties are provided in detail in Figure 13.3 and summarised below in Table 13.4.

**Table 13.4: Residual Visual Impacts (after mitigation)**

Degree of Visual Impact	Number of properties before mitigation	Number of properties after mitigation
Substantial Negative Visual Impact	2	0
Moderate Negative Visual Impact	2	2
Slight Negative Visual Impact	34	14
No Change	28	50

### 13.8 Conclusion

The proposed Carlingford Ferry development is located at both Greenore and Greencastle.

The proposal is located directly within the Greenore Urban Landscape Character Area at Greenore. Due to the nature of the proposal, the scheme is complementary to the existing Greenore urban landscapes and

there are low levels of landscape resource change. There are therefore no significant landscape impacts predicted for the Greenore Urban Landscape. The proposal is located with the Coastal Hills and Bays Landscape Character at Greencastle. At Greencastle the proposals are lowlying in the surrounding landscape and ships moving across the Lough area common feature. The predicted significance of landscape impact for Coastal Hills and Bays Landscape is moderate negative.

The Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) has been established for the proposed development. The extent of visibility of the proposal is wide due to the adjacent hills and mountains on either side of Carlingford Lough. However, due to the distance and low levels of visual resource change any visual impacts are extremely limited within the ZVI. The actual visual impacts have been predicted for a range of sensitive visual receptors.

In terms of visual impacts for residential properties 66 properties assessed, 28 nr properties within the study area were assessed as having 'No Change', with 34 nr properties assessed as resulting in a 'Slight Negative Visual Impact', 2 nr properties are considered as having a 'Moderate Negative Visual Impact' with 2 nr properties immediately east and west of the proposal resulting in a 'Substantial Negative Impact'.

A review of the Louth County Development Plan and both the Newry & Mourne District Rural Area Subject Plan 1986 – 1999 and Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (Draft August 2006) have been reviewed and it has been established that there are several protected views in the vicinity of the proposal within County Louth. However, due to the flat nature of the topography and intervening vegetation there will be no significant visual impacts for the protected views. The proposal at Greencastle lies within the Mournes Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This designation covers an expansive area and the proposals will be a minor feature from the wider AONB area due to the limited scale of the proposals and their lowlying nature. No significant landscape impacts have been predicted for the Mournes AONB.

A total of five viewpoints have been assessed as typical view of the proposals from Greenore and Greencastle. Significant visual impacts have been predicted for the viewpoints in close proximity only at Greencastle.

A range of mitigation measures has been proposed that reduce the significant impacts predicted.

Overall, when the landscape and visual impacts are considered, the proposal is acceptable and the surrounding landscape and its visual resources have the ability to accommodate changes of the type associated with this development.