

## 7 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIS considers the potential and likely significant landscape and visual effects of the proposed alterations to the permitted development. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and describe any likely significant landscape and visual effects as a result of the proposed alterations in the context of the permitted development.

### 7.2 Methodology

#### 7.2.1 Introduction

Methods used in this assessment have been developed by RPS and are derived from the DoEHLG "Landscape and Landscape Assessment" (June 2000) and 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). These 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 is identified to reduce as far as possible any potential significant landscape and visual impacts.

#### 7.2.2 Landscape Assessment Criteria and Terminology

The following section describes the criteria and terminology used for during the landscape assessment: -

##### 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 that is significant within the wider region or at a national level;
- *High Quality* - Areas that have a very strong positive character with valued and consistent distinctive features that gives the landscape unity, richness and harmony. A landscape that is 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; and
- *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 are 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 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1 Significance of Landscape Impact**

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

### **7.2.3 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 proposal. 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 (adverse or beneficial) the overall scene or cause some alteration to the view for a significant length of time.
- *Medium magnitude:* Where some changes occur (adverse or beneficial) in the view, but not for a substantial part of the view and/or for a substantial length of time.
- *Low magnitude:* Where only a minor alteration to the view occurs (adverse or beneficial) and/or 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 7.2 illustrates significance of visual impact as a correlation between viewer sensitivity and visual resource change magnitude.

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.

**Table 7.2 Significance of Visual Impact**

| Visual resource change magnitude | Visual Sensitivity |                        |                        |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                                  | <i>Low</i>         | <i>Medium</i>          | <i>High</i>            |
| <i>No change</i>                 | No change          | No change              | No change              |
| <i>Low</i>                       | Slight             | Slight / moderate      | Moderate               |
| <i>Medium</i>                    | Slight / moderate  | Moderate               | Moderate / Substantial |
| <i>High</i>                      | Moderate           | Moderate / Substantial | Substantial            |

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 proposed alterations 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 proposal specification, a map is created to show areas from where the proposed development would theoretically 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.

Photographs & Photomontages

Photographs and photomontages have been prepared for selected representative viewpoints throughout the study area as indicated in Figure 7.3 and illustrated in section 7.5.5 below (see EIS Volume II – Figures). Photomontages have been prepared to illustrate typical potential views from the village of Ringaskiddy as requested by An Bord Pleanála in their letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Viewpoints are chosen to give a typical representative sample of views of the proposal within the landscape using the parameters of distance and direction of view. 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.

Photographs from each viewpoint location are taken covering an arc of view matching that of the visual extent of the proposed alterations.

## **7.3 Receiving Environment**

### **7.3.1 Scale and Character**

The village of Ringaskiddy is located southeast of Cork City, and has a reputation as a hub of industry for County Cork, a deepwater port linking Ireland to the UK and Continental Europe, and as ferry port linking Ireland to France. The proposed alterations and permitted development site comprises an area of land, which has been reclaimed since circa the 1970's and a further small area of seabed which is proposed to be reclaimed. The northern boundary of the proposed site abuts the waters of Cork Harbour with Monkstown, Cobh and Whitepoint located further north, while the N28 and Ringaskiddy village is located to the south. To the east of the proposed alterations and permitted development is located the National Maritime College and Haulbowline Island, while existing industrial lands are located to the west (see Site Location Figure 3.1 of the EIS).

Cobh is a significantly larger settlement than Ringaskiddy and has an important tourist industry and acts as a satellite town for Cork City. Large cruise liners regularly berth at Cobh from where tourists can explore Cobh and the wider Cork City area. The topography at Cobh rises steeply from the shoreline with stepped terraces of houses that broadly follow the contours with direct views across the Harbour.

Monkstown is located to the northwest of Ringaskiddy and like Cobh has grown up the steep hillsides that surround Cork Harbour with distinctive terraces and occasional church spire breaking the skyline. Due to the terraced nature of the settlement there are potential views across the Harbour.

Haulbowline Island is located to the east and the topography of the island site is generally flat in the centre with undulations to the western and eastern most edges before reaching sea level at the edge. The naval base buildings offer screening in views to the west but the east side of the island is open to views to the north east and south. The eastern side of the island is known as east tip and consists of the brownfield site of the former Irish Steel plant that is currently subject to remediation. Views of the island are available from Cobh to the north, Monkstown to the west and Ringaskiddy to the southwest.

In addition the Cork Harbour is well used for commercial and leisure craft that will also have views of the island.

The proposed alterations and permitted development site comprises a portion of coastal lands located on the north-eastern periphery of an extended industrial area that consists of various chemical and pharmaceutical factories including Pfizer. There is an associated narrow jetty extending into the Harbour at Ballybricken Point to the northwest of the site known as the ADM Jetty. The existing port facilities and associated ship and vehicle traffic at Ringaskiddy are a prominent part of the existing landscape on this side of Cork City.

The topography of the alterations and permitted development site is flat reaching sea level at the harbour's edge. Further inland to the southwest, beyond the N28 and Ringaskiddy village, the landscape becomes increasingly rural. The topography also rises steadily to a crest over 50m OD, permitting medium distance views toward the site. The even and level nature of the proposed alterations and permitted development site is contrasted by the steep, rising elevations of lands that surround the inner Cork Harbour at Ringaskiddy, Monkstown and Cobh.

Given the coastal location of this proposal it is anticipated that there will be potential views of the proposed alterations available from:

- Monkstown to the northwest;
- Cobh to the northeast (particularly Blackpoint and Whitepoint);
- Haulbowline to the east;
- Ringaskiddy and the adjacent coastline to the south.

The landscape character of the study area can be described by use of the following distinctive landscape character areas (which are illustrated in Figure 7.2):

#### **Estuarine Harbour-Based Industrial and Maritime Landscape**

This landscape character area is concentrated mainly on low-lying parts of the landscape at the edge of Cork Harbour, but also expands to the hillsides. Many of the industrial sites are located at the waters edge for operational purposes. Industrial sites are located at Ringaskiddy (mainly pharmaceutical plants), Haulbowline Island with its naval activities and east tip site, Rushbrooke (Cork Dockyard), Aghada and Whitegate (electricity generating station, and oil refinery). The value of this landscape is mainly economic, due to its industrial nature. This is a generally robust changing landscape. The industrial landscapes around the existing Harbour and reclaimed lands are generally of low visual quality with frequent industrial type buildings and equipment and vacant lands. The proposed site has a recreational value as it is used for by walkers, and for the launching of recreational boats at an existing slipway and pier. Recently the erection of a number of tall wind turbines has altered the landscape character of the Cork Harbour at Ringaskiddy and the wind turbines are visible over a wide area and are the tallest features in the landscape. The permitted Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment is located within this landscape character area. Overall this landscape character area has a low sensitivity to change.

#### **Harbour Edge Town Centre and Undulating Residential Townscape**

Town centres such as Ringaskiddy, Monkstown, Cobh and Passage West are all located at the waterside of Cork Harbour. The residential areas of these towns have spread outwards along the harbour. Monkstown, Cobh and Passage West have also extensively spread onto the surrounding hillsides, with Cobh continuing to expand on to the higher parts of the hill on which it is located. The towns have a scenic value due to their location on the harbour. This value is expressed by the designations of scenic landscapes and scenic routes. These towns also have recreational value in the form of town parks or walking trails. Cobh has a number of structures recorded for protection. These structures give Cobh a high scenic value. Due to Cobh's history it attracts many visitors and has a high recreational value. This landscape character area has a medium sensitivity to change.

#### **Undulating Agricultural Patchwork Landscape**

The undulating agricultural landscape is a landscape found over a wide area in County Cork and comprises agricultural fields, and meadows, hedgerows as field boundaries, rural houses, farm complexes etc. It also comprises protected structures scattered across the landscape. This landscape extends inland from the harbour's edge and is undulating in nature. This landscape character area is medium sensitivity to change.

### **7.3.2 Planning Designations**

#### **County Cork Development Plan 2014**

The Cork County Development Plan 2014 states the following objectives regarding scenic amenity views and prospects:

**County Development Plan Objective GI 7-1: General Views and Prospects** Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly sea views, river or lake views, views of unspoilt mountains, upland or coastal landscapes, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty as recognized in the Draft Landscape Strategy.

**County Development Plan Objective GI 7-2: Scenic Routes** Protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes and in particular stretches of scenic routes that have very special views and prospects identified in this plan. The scenic routes identified in this plan are shown on the scenic amenity maps listed in Volume 2 Chapter 5 Scenic Routes of the plan.

#### **County Development Plan Objective GI 7-3: Development on Scenic Routes**

a) Require those seeking to carry out development in the environs of a scenic route and/or an area with important views and prospects, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse obstruction or

degradation of the views towards and from vulnerable landscape features. In such areas, the appropriateness of the design, site layout, and landscaping of the proposed development must be demonstrated along with mitigation measures to prevent significant alterations to the appearance or character of the area; and

- b) Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes.

**County Development Plan Objective GI 7-4:** Development on the approaches to Towns and Villages: Ensure that the approach roads to towns and villages are protected from inappropriate development, which would detract from the setting and historic character of these settlements.

**County Development Plan Objective GI 8-1:** Prominent and Strategic Metropolitan Greenbelt Areas requiring Special Protection Protect those prominent open hilltops, valley sides and ridges that define the character of the Metropolitan Cork Greenbelt and those areas which form strategic, largely undeveloped gaps between the main Greenbelt settlements. These areas are labelled MGB1 in the Metropolitan Greenbelt map and it is an objective to preserve them from development.

**Table 7.3: Designated Scenic Landscapes and Scenic Routes in study area**

| Designation          | Location  |
|----------------------|---|
| High Value Landscape | Monkstown   |
| High Value Landscape | Great Island  |
| High Value Landscape | Spike Island  |
| High Value Landscape | Haulbowline Island  |
| High Value Landscape | Barnahely   |
| Scenic Route S51     | R630 Regional Road & Local Road from Ballynacorra via East Ferry to Whitegate and Roche's Point. Views of the Estuary & Harbour, Roche's Point & the rural coastal environment. |
| Scenic Route S53     | R624 Regional Road, between Cobh and Belvelly - Views of the Upper Harbour and coastal environment.   |
| Scenic Route S54     | R610 Regional Road, Local Road & N28 National Primary Route between Passage West and Ringaskiddy - Views of the Harbour.  |

## 7.4 Landscape & Visual Context of Proposed Alterations

### 7.4.1 Landside Container Handling Alterations Landscape & Visual Overview

As outlined in the Project Description Chapter 3, it is proposed that container handling operations will be altered from a system using rubber tyre gantry cranes (RTG's) as assessed in the EIS for the proposed Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment to a system using straddle carriers (SC's) and rail mounted gantries (RMG's). This alteration to straddle carriers will result in four changes relevant to the landscape & visual impact assessment; (i) the change from 6 nr RTG's to 2 nr RMG's and 15 nr SC's; (ii) the change in container stack height that decreases from 5 high in places to 3 high; (iii) an increase in the footprint of the container storage area; and (iv) alterations to the positions of lighting columns and noise barriers.

With regards to operational stage effects, each of the four relevant changes are considered as follows. The change from RTG's to a combination of RMG's and SC's will result in fewer of the tall gantry cranes and more SC's that are smaller than the RTG's and RMG's. This change will result in a slight

decrease in predicted visual effect especially when combined with the lowering in stack heights from 5 high to 3 high in places even though 5 high stacks are moved closer to the village of Ringaskiddy. While the footprint of the stacks increases this will be barely discernible from the surrounding area as the site is flat and the container stacks are read as one from distance. The slight movement of some of the light columns and will not noticeably change the appearance of the permitted development when viewed from the surrounding area. While the container stack is proposed to extend closer to the village of Ringaskiddy the containers and cranes are well screened by existing vegetation and fencing/barrier and will not be noticeably different from permitted development.

#### **7.4.2 Main Berth and Mooring Dolphins Alterations Landscape & Visual Overview**

The alterations to the quay comprise a minor modification to the shape of the southern end of berth 1. The alterations require a minor extension to the dredge pocket to the south. These works will also include the replacement of two existing mooring dolphins with three new mooring dolphins.

At the operational stage, the alterations proposed will not be noticeably different from the permitted development. The dolphins are located at a similar location to the existing dolphins and are not widely visible from within the surroundings. The three proposed dolphins will be of a similar scale and mass as the existing dolphins. The alterations to the quay wall will not be visible from the surrounding landscape due the location of this quay wall in the inner harbour.

#### **7.4.3 Entrance and Interchange Area Alterations Landscape & Visual Overview**

It is proposed to alter the entrance and exit areas that will be moved and realigned with the separation between the entrance and exit areas increased.

The operational stage effects for the alterations to the entrance and interchange area will not result in any change in the predicted landscape and visual effects. The alterations are located in broadly the same area as that within the permitted development being located well within the development and away from the village of Ringaskiddy. The noise and visual barrier recently erected as part of the permitted development prevents views. Any visible vehicle movements will appear the same in long distance views with no noticeable change in predicted visual resource.

#### **7.4.4 Maintenance, Office and Customs Building Alterations Landscape & Visual Overview**

It is proposed as part of an alternative handling operating system to have a new dedicated building immediately south of the existing ferry terminal access road. The buildings will consist of a terminal office, maintenance workshop, stores and workshops/terminal office. At the operational stage the proposed alterations to the buildings will result in a location similar to that within the permitted development in most cases in that they are in a non-conspicuous part of the Ringaskiddy Port site. The only noticeable difference will be the larger Maintenance Building. It is proposed that the Maintenance building will be mid grey in colour reflecting the commitment in the permitted EIS for the tall ship to shore cranes to be mid grey in colour. The Custom Building is proposed to be located immediately north of the existing ferry terminal access road at a similar location to where similar buildings were proposed in the permitted development. The majority of the altered buildings will not be widely visible from the surrounding landscape with only glimpse views from higher areas with the village of Ringaskiddy. The potential visual impact of the Maintenance Building is discussed in section 7.5 below. As with the permitted development the alterations to the buildings are read in the context of the wider Ringaskiddy Port and will be not be overly prominent.

## **7.5 Impact Assessment – Operational Stage**

### **7.5.1 Landscape Character Area Impacts**

The proposed alterations to the permitted Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment are located directly within the Estuarine Harbour-based Industrial and Maritime Landscape.

#### **Estuarine Harbour-Based Industrial and Maritime Landscape**

This landscape character area is concentrated mainly on low-lying parts of the landscape at the edge of Cork Harbour including the islands. This is a generally robust frequently changing landscape. The current Ringaskiddy Port site is a prominent part of this landscape and associated with wider industrial landscapes to the west of Ringaskiddy including the Pfizer factory. The recently erected wind turbines are a new and very tall feature in the Cork Harbour. The permitted Ringaskiddy Redevelopment is also a feature of this landscape.

The components of the proposed alterations are similar in character to the components of the permitted development. The alterations move the location or vary the design of the components of the permitted development and therefore there is little potential for change in landscape resource as a result. The alterations remain within the harbour based industrial landscape and being read completely in this context, no significant landscape impacts are predicted.

The Estuarine Harbour-based Industrial and Maritime Landscape Character Area has a low sensitivity to change.

The predicted change in landscape resource is no change.

When landscape impacts of the proposed alterations are assessed during the operational phase there will be no change.

#### **Harbour Edge Town Centre and Undulating Residential Townscape**

The proposed alterations are not directly located within this landscape character and there are no direct impacts as result. The proposed alterations will however provide a backdrop to Ringaskiddy, Monkstown and Cobh and there is therefore potential for indirect landscape impacts. The proposals are located at distance from Monkstown and Cobh and this fact when combined with the fact that the existing port facilities and the permitted development are part of the backdrop to both these settlements decreases potential for indirect change in landscape resource. With regards to the indirect landscape impact on Ringaskiddy the proposed alterations are located directly adjacent to the settlement and closer than as located within the permitted development but Ringaskiddy is known as a port village already and although the alterations are closer to the village they are either completely screened or of low prominence and read as part of the wider existing and permitted port development that offsets any potential for indirect landscape impacts.

This landscape character area has a medium sensitivity to change.

The predicted change in landscape resource is no change.

When landscape impacts of the proposed alterations are assessed during the operational phase there will be no change.

#### **Undulating Agricultural Patchwork Landscape**

This landscape extends inland from the harbour's edge and is of an undulating nature. The proposed alterations are not directly located within this landscape character and there are no direct impacts as result. The proposed alterations are located at distance from this landscape character area, a fact that

limits the influence of the alterations on this extensive landscape. In most cases there are settlements or urban landscapes located between the proposals and this landscape.

This landscape character area has a medium sensitivity to change.

The predicted change in landscape resource is no change.

When landscape impacts of the proposed alterations are assessed during the operational phase there will be no change.

### **7.5.2 Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)**

The ZVI for the proposed alterations is the same as that for the permitted development due to the location of the port site in low lying land surrounded by hills as illustrated in Figure 7.1. The ZVI has been used to identify the locations where potential visual impacts from the proposed alterations may occur. As viewer distance from the proposed alterations and existing harbour facility and permitted development increases, the level of visibility decreases significantly. In reality, views of the proposed alterations will be entirely obscured from a number of locations within the ZVI area such as from within the Ringaskiddy, Monkstown and Cobh urban areas and undulating shoreline.

The following text describes the actual predicted visual impacts on visual receptors within the ZVI.

### **7.5.3 Planning Policy Designation Impacts**

#### **Cork County Development Plan 2014**

Impacts on relevant designations contained within the Cork County Development Plan are assessed below. The proposed alterations are not located directly within the areas designated as high scenic value and no significant landscape or visual impacts are predicted due to the separation distances and fact that the alterations are located with a robust harbour based industrial landscape.

**Scenic Route S51:** The R630 is located at its nearest approximately 6km east of the proposed alterations and at such distances it is currently impossible to discern detail at the existing site and Haulbowline interrupts views further. The proposed alterations activities will not be noticeable. The predicted visual impact of the proposed alterations for the Scenic Route 51 is no change.

**Scenic Route S53:** The majority of this route is located on the west side of Great Island and therefore visually separated from location of the proposed alterations. On approaching Cobh the road does offer glimpse and direct views across the harbour to the location of the proposed alterations. The views are from low lying positions. The existing site is barely noticeable in these views and the proposed alterations will not be noticeable at this distance either with Haulbowline Island the main focal point in the foreground. The predicted significance of visual impact of the proposed alterations is no change.

**Scenic Route S54:** People driving the scenic route in the direction from Passage West to Monkstown will be looking in the direction of the proposed alterations and the permitted development but only with glimpse views available. When leaving Passage West the receptor will experience a brief view towards the location of the proposed alterations but a distance of approximately 3km. Due to the distance between receptor and the low visibility of the proposed alterations, they will be read as part of the wider landscape that includes more prominent tall electricity pylons and cranes at Rushbrooke and the existing port facilities.

Drivers on the scenic route in the direction of Monkstown to Monkstown Creek and vice versa will have a view in the direction of the proposed alterations and the permitted development (see Photomontage Viewpoint 6). The proposed alterations to container stacking arrangements and RMG's and SC's will be visible due to the open view over the harbour towards the existing port and the permitted

development. The proposed alterations are read with the existing port facilities including the ADM Jetty and DWB that are more prominent in the foreground and will be barely noticeable.

As with the permitted development upper parts of the ship to shore cranes will be intermittently visible to people driving the scenic route from Shanbally to Ringaskiddy. The views are read in the context of the urban development on this side of Ringaskiddy and the existing port facilities and the alterations will not change the visibility of the permitted development.

When entering Ringaskiddy the existing port facilities and vegetation significantly limit views to the proposed alterations.

The predicted visual impact of the proposed alterations on the Scenic Route 54 is no change.

### **7.5.3 Visual Impacts on Residential Properties**

An assessment has occurred within the ZVI to determine the magnitude of visual impact of the proposed alterations in the context of the existing port facilities and permitted development during the operational phase on potential views from sensitive visual receptors including residential properties.

#### **Ringaskiddy Residential Properties**

As with all the settlements located around the Harbour there are large areas of Ringaskiddy that will not have views of the proposal due to intervening vegetation and buildings. However due to the terraced nature of the settlement there will be direct views from a number of properties on the northern side of the built form. The quayside alterations and new dolphins will not be noticeable from properties in Ringaskiddy. The alterations to the operations will mean that RMG's and SC's are visible rather than RTG's only. The SC's are slightly smaller than RTG's. The containers will be 3 high in places rather than 5 high in all places as allowed by the permitted development. The containers are spread over a wider area on site. Even though the containers will be stacked at 5 high in proximity to the village, the containers will be well screened from the village by the recently erected noise and visual barrier and intervening trees. The alterations to the buildings will be screened predominantly and it is only the upper most southern elevation of the maintenance building that will be potential visible from properties with a view towards the port (see Photomontage Viewpoints 1 to 5). The proposed maintenance building is set sufficiently back from the village and not prominent in views. The potential visibility of the maintenance building is decreased by significant tree cover and the recently erected noise and visual barrier at the boundary of port as part of the permitted development. The proposed changes to the lighting masts will be difficult to discern from the lighting masts of the permitted development.

The visible components of the proposed alterations will be similar in character to the components of the permitted development. The alterations move the location or vary the design of the components of the permitted development and therefore there is little potential for change in visual resource as a result. The alterations remain within the harbour based industrial landscape and are read completely in this context. Overall the predicted significance of visual impact is predicted as moderate adverse for the residential properties at Ringaskiddy with a view and not significant.

#### **Monkstown Residential Properties**

There are significant areas of open water located between Monkstown and the site the proposed alterations. The existing port facilities and the permitted development at Ringaskiddy are also a feature of the views from properties as are the cranes and other port facilities at Rushbrooke. While the proposed alterations will be located within the view from those dwellings overlooking the Harbour the distance from the proposed alterations combined with the presence of existing port facilities and on-going activity of ships coming and going from the port will offset potential visual impacts (See Photomontage Viewpoint 6). The quayside changes will not be noticeable and the change to containers and SC's will be hard to discern from Monkstown. The proposed changes to the lighting masts will be difficult to discern from the lighting masts of the permitted development. Overall the predicted significance of visual impact is predicted as moderate adverse and not significant for the residential properties at Monkstown with a view.

### **Cobh Residential Properties**

As with Monkstown there are significant areas of open water located between Cobh and the site of the proposed alterations and the settlement is located at a greater distance from the proposals as well. The existing port facilities at Ringaskiddy are a minor feature of the views from properties due to the distance and angle of view that are directed south predominantly towards Haulbowline Island. The proposed changes to the lighting masts will be difficult to discern from the lighting masts of the permitted development. The distance of the proposals from Cobh combined with the presence of existing port facilities and ships will significantly offset potential visual impacts. Overall the predicted significance of visual impact is predicted as moderate adverse and not significant for the residential properties at Cobh with a view towards the proposed alterations.

### **Blackpoint and Whitepoint Properties**

The majority of properties at Blackpoint and Whitepoint will not have a view of the proposed alterations as they are interrupted by adjacent buildings and extensive tree cover that is found in this area. It is predominantly only from a limited number of properties that front onto the shore that will have potential views. The taller components of the proposal such as the altered container stacking arrangements and RMG's, SC's and the Maintenance Building, will be the most noticeable features. The proposed alterations to the containers (in places where stacked 3 high) and the SC's will be lower than for the permitted development. The proposals are read against the background of the existing port facilities with existing tall cranes and mast lighting and in the context of the permitted development. Ships coming and going from the Ringaskiddy Harbour are a feature of views from those properties that overlook the Harbour. The proposed changes to the lighting masts will be difficult to discern from the lighting masts of the permitted development. The proposals will occupy a small portion of the panoramic view up and down the Harbour. Overall the predicted significance of visual impact is predicted as moderate adverse and not significant for the limited number of residential properties at Blackpoint and Whitepoint with a view of the proposed alterations.

### **Harbour Users**

The Harbour is well used by commercial and leisure craft, for example visitors to Spike Island currently travel in boats from Cobh. There are many leisure craft moored at both Monkstown and Cobh and there is a small slipway at Ringaskiddy. All such vessels will have potential for views of the proposed alterations from differing angles and locations within the open water. The existing port facilities are a feature of all views in proximity to the site as are visiting ships that travel to Ringaskiddy, Tivoli and City Quays. Views from all leisure craft will be from a low level in the water and the alterations will not vary in appearance significantly from the permitted development in close views. The predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate and not significant in close proximity but decreasing to no change with distance away from the site of the proposed alterations.

#### **7.5.4 Viewpoint Assessment**

A series of representative viewpoints have been selected from locations throughout the study area and photomontages prepared of the proposed alterations and subjected to specific assessment below. In particular viewpoints from the village of Ringaskiddy have been selected as representative of typical views from the village. These photomontages have been prepared in response to the specific request from An Bord Pleanála in their letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The location of all viewpoints can be found on Figure 7.3 and Photomontages are provided in EIS Volume II - Figures.

##### ***Viewpoint 1: View from the junction of N28 and Martello Park Ringaskiddy***

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from across the N28 in Ringaskiddy. This view is available to the local community and passing traffic. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is low lying and across parkland to the existing Ringaskiddy port area. Existing high mast lighting and fencing (including the recently erected noise and visual

barrier erected as part of the permitted development) can be observed above a dense line of trees that significantly restrict views out to the north. The view is therefore enclosed in character. The screening effect is enhanced by existing buildings that are visible between gaps in the trees. Grassed earth mounds also rise above the level of the road to screen surface level views of the port area. Due to trees and the low lying nature of the viewpoint it is not possible to view the open water of Cork Harbour nor the higher ground at Cobh on the northern side of the Harbour.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations to the landside container operations are completely screened from view by existing fencing and trees. The proposed alterations to the quayside and mooring dolphins are similarly completely screened. The alterations to the Customs Building will be completely screened from view. The alterations to the Maintenance Building will be partially visible through trees. Only the upper portions of the Maintenance Building will be visible of its elevation facing the village broken by existing trees and screened permanently by the noise and visual screen erected as part of the permitted development. Reconfigured high mast lighting will be visible from this location but will be similar to that currently present in the view and to the permitted development. As for the permitted development occasional and intermittent glimpses of moving ship to shore cranes will be potentially visible but only the upper portions of cranes will be visible.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

### **Viewpoint 2: View from N28 junction with St Joseph's Terrace Ringaskiddy**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from across the N28 in Ringaskiddy. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* this existing view from across the N28 road allowing views direct and close proximity views of the existing Ringaskiddy port area. Existing facilities at the port are visible including high mast lighting and the port ferry terminal entrance. The recently erected noise and visual screen barrier as part of the permitted development is visible and prevents any partial views through to low level activities with the port. Both Monkstown and Cobh are completely screened from view. The view is enclosed in character.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations to the landside container operations are completely screened from view by existing fencing and trees. The proposed alterations to the quayside and mooring dolphins are similarly completely screened. The alterations to the Customs Building will be completely screened from view. The alterations to the Maintenance Building will be partially visible through trees. Only the upper portions of the Maintenance Building will be visible of its elevation facing the village broken by existing trees and screened permanently by the noise and visual screen erected as part of the permitted development. Reconfigured high mast lighting will be visible from this location but will be similar to that currently present in the view. As for the permitted development occasional and intermittent glimpses of moving ship to shore cranes only will be potentially visible but only the upper portions of cranes will be visible.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

### **Viewpoint 3: View from N28 Main Street Ringaskiddy**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from the N28 Main Street in Ringaskiddy. This view is available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view from across the N28 road allows views direct and close proximity views of the existing Ringaskiddy port area. Existing facilities at the port are partly visible including high mast lighting and the port ferry terminal entrance. The recently erected noise and visual screen barrier as part of the permitted development is visible and prevent any partial views through to low level activities within the port. Both Monkstown and Cobh are completely screened from view. The view is enclosed in character.

*Predicted view:* the proposed operational phase will be well screened from this viewpoint by the existing trees. As with the permitted development ship to shore cranes and high mast lighting will be visible. The existing noise and visual barrier screens views to remaining port facilities and alterations with exception of the Maintenance Building that will be visible in the centre of the view. The upper portions of the Maintenance Building will be visible and it is well screened by both the existing noise and visual barrier and existing trees.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

#### **Viewpoint 4: View from Martello Park (Upper) Ringaskiddy**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from the small housing estate at Martello Park. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is elevated allowing views from the roadside and over roof tops of Martello Park (lower) to Monkstown and Cobh with a glimpse view to the harbour and open water. High mast lighting is visible within the existing port area but little else is discernible due to intervening trees and buildings.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be completely screened from view by trees and buildings. As with the permitted development the ship to shore cranes will be partly visible through the upper canopy of trees. Alterations to the high mast lights will not be discernible from existing lights.

*Magnitude of change:* the magnitude of change in visual resource is no change.

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be no change.

#### **Viewpoint 5: View from St Carthage Place at its junction with Priests Avenue**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from the small housing estate at St Carthage Place and Priests Avenue. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is elevated and directed along the vista of Priests Avenue towards the harbour area. High mast lighting is visible within the existing port area is difficult to discern from the complex background in the view. Existing buildings completely screen views out except for a narrow glimpse of the higher ground at Cobh on the opposite side of the harbour.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be completely screened from view by buildings and topography. Alterations to the high mast lights will not be discernible from existing and permitted lights.

*Magnitude of change:* the magnitude of change in visual resource is no change.

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be no change.

#### **Viewpoint 6: View from R610 across Monkstown Creek**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from the R610 at Monkstown Creek. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is low lying but open allowing views from the roadside across Monkstown Creek towards Ringaskiddy. Beyond the Creek topography interrupts views to the existing Pfizer factory but a prominent water tower and factory building are visible on the skyline. The ADM jetty at the existing DWB is just discernible but read with the background landscape. Tall cranes at the DWB are also visible along with a ship and buildings. Further buildings at the existing Harbour and the National Maritime College are also visible in the centre left of the view. Ships will be a continual feature of the viewpoint coming and going from the DWB and the Ferry facilities. The recently constructed wind turbines are the tallest man made features in the view.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be read in the visual context of the existing port facilities and the permitted development. The alterations to quayside with extension southwards and removal of two mooring dolphins and provision of three new mooring dolphins will not be noticeable due to screening from the ADM jetty and existing DWB. The changes in operations and container handling systems will be visible. The containers will be visible but stacked at different heights (3 high in most places and up to 5 high elsewhere) than as for the permitted development. The SC's will be slightly smaller than the permitted RTG's and the proposed RMG's. The RMG's will be visible but less in number when compared to the RTG's for the permitted development. The Ship to Shore cranes will be the tallest part of the proposed development but read with the tall cranes present at the existing DWB and no different than the permitted development. The alterations to the Custom Building and the Maintenance Building will not be discernible from this viewpoint due to the complex view of the port facilities and background view of the hills.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

#### **Viewpoint 7: View from Whitepoint Drive**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from Whitepoint Drive in Cobh. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is low lying and across parkland to open water with Ringaskiddy beyond. The view is panoramic in nature and extends to the left beyond the limit of the camera towards Haulbowline. The existing port facilities at Ringaskiddy port are clearly visible with a ship at berth, cranes, buildings and tanks located within the view. The ADM jetty is just visible to the right of the view. As well as the existing port facilities there also extensive industrial buildings located to the rear of the port that breaks the skyline in the centre and right of the view. The recently constructed wind turbines are the tallest man made features in the view.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be read in the visual context of the existing port facilities and the permitted development. The alterations to quayside with extension southwards and removal of two mooring dolphins and provision of three new mooring dolphins will be completely screened from view by the permitted development. The changes in operations and container handling systems will be directly visible. The containers will be visible but stacked at different and lower heights (3 high in most places and up to 5 high elsewhere) than as for the permitted development and also spread over a wider area. The containers are not prominent and read against the background port facilities and industrial development outside the port. The containers are well below the skyline. The SC's will be slightly smaller than the permitted RTG's and the proposed RMG's. The RMG's will be visible but less in number when compared to the RTG's for the permitted development. The Ship to Shore cranes will be the tallest part of the proposed development but read with the tall cranes present at the existing DWB and no different than the permitted development. The alterations to the Custom Building and the Maintenance Building will be discernible from this viewpoint. The Custom Building is a small alteration and difficult to read due to the complex view of the port facilities and the permitted development. The

Maintenance Building is taller but does not break the skyline and is read against the background of hills and existing industrial development at Ringaskiddy. Overall as with the permitted development there is no loss of view from this viewpoint as the panoramic view up and down Cork Harbour is maintained.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

#### **Viewpoint 8: View from Brookvale Cobh**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is from Brookvale in Cobh. This view is predominantly available to the local community. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is elevated and across trees and houses towards Ringaskiddy port area. The landmark spire of Christchurch Church of Ireland is prominent in the foreground and interrupts the view to the DWB area. It is possible to discern a ship at berth and buildings but other details are more difficult to make up due to the distance of this view. Industrial buildings at Ringaskiddy to the rear of the port are noticeable due to their higher location on hilltops. The recently constructed wind turbines are prominent features in the view.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be read via glimpse views only but in the visual context of the existing port facilities and the permitted development. The alterations to quayside with extension southwards and removal of two mooring dolphins and provision of three new mooring dolphins will be completely screened from view by trees and development in Cobh in the foreground. The changes in operations and container handling systems will be partly visible but at this distance and limited glimpse view not noticeably different from the permitted development. The SC's will be slightly smaller than the permitted RTG's and the proposed RMG's. The RMG's will be visible but less in number when compared to the RTG's for the permitted development. The Ship to Shore cranes will be the tallest part of the proposed development but read with the tall cranes present at the existing DWB and no different than the permitted development. The alterations to the Maintenance Building will be just be discernible to the left of the view from this viewpoint but viewed well below the skyline and read against the background of trees and existing urban and industrial development at Ringaskiddy. The Custom Building will be completely screened. The wind turbines remain prominent man-made structures to the right of the view.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

#### **Viewpoint 9 View from Haulbowline Bridge**

*Viewer sensitivity:* this view is available from Haulbowline Bridge at Rocky Island. The viewer sensitivity is high.

*Existing visual resource:* the existing view is slightly elevated on the bridge. The view is directed between Rocky Island and Haulbowline Island towards Ringaskiddy port. The existing port facilities are visible but not prominent due to the distance of the view. It is just possible to discern details such as high mast lighting and three cranes due to the fact that they break the skyline. Existing buildings and silos are more noticeable. Beyond the port facilities the industrial buildings at Ringaskiddy are noticeable on the skyline. The ADM jetty is just discernible in the centre right of the view. The recently constructed wind turbines are the tallest man made features in the view.

*Predicted view:* the proposed alterations will be read in the visual context of the existing port facilities and the permitted development. The alterations to quayside with extension southwards and removal of

two mooring dolphins and provision of three new mooring dolphins will be completely screened from view by the permitted development and existing port facilities. The changes in operations and container handling systems will be directly visible. The containers will be visible but stacked at different heights (3 high in most places and up to 5 high elsewhere) than as for the permitted development and also spread over a wider area. The containers are not prominent and read against the background port facilities and industrial development outside the port. The containers are well below the skyline. The SC's will be slightly smaller than the permitted RTG's and the proposed RMG's. The Ship to Shore cranes will be the tallest part of the proposed development but read with the tall cranes present at the existing DWB (and the existing wind turbines) and no different than the permitted development. The alterations to the Custom Building and the Maintenance Building will be discernible from this viewpoint. The Custom Building is a small alteration and difficult to read due to the complex view of the port facilities and the permitted development. The Maintenance Building is taller but does not break the skyline and is read against the background existing port facilities and adjacent industrial development at Ringaskiddy. Overall as with the permitted development there is no loss of view from this viewpoint as the panoramic view up and down Cork Harbour is maintained.

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

*Significance of Visual Impact:* the predicted significance of visual impact will be moderate adverse and not significant.

### **7.6.6 Lighting Impacts**

The alterations to the permitted development will require changes to the locations of outdoor night time lighting. The details of the alterations to the permitted lighting layout are described in full in the Project Description Chapter 3. The alterations to lighting will not be noticeably different from the appearance of the permitted lighting layout when viewed from the surroundings.

Such lights will be read against the background of significant existing lights in the Ringaskiddy area and no significant visual impact is predicted for the alterations to lighting.

### **7.5.7 Cumulative Effects**

The assessment of potential landscape and visual cumulative impacts has considered a range of projects including the following projects and proposed projects:

- M28 Upgrade
- Dunkettle interchange
- East Tip Remediation project
- Indaver incinerator
- DePuy turbine
- Martello Tower site reprofiling
- Steelwork's site
- Industrial/commercial developments in the area
- Shannonpark roundabout
- Cobh Marina
- Monkstown Marina
- Cobh Cruise Berth Upgrade/Mooring Dolphins
- Spike Island Masterplan
- Cobh Second Cruise Berth
- Whitepoint Marina

When potential construction and operational stage effects are considered for the proposed alterations for potential cumulative landscape and visual effects they will not result in any significant cumulative landscape and visual effects. Construction stage activities are likely to involve an increase in

construction traffic for all cumulative projects. HGV traffic is frequent feature of this industrial landscape and the N28 is a busy road with low potential for significant cumulative visual impacts as a result. The operational stage activities proposed as part of the alterations are sufficiently separated from any permitted or planned projects and very minor in the scale of the permitted Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment project to avoid potential cumulative effects.

### **7.5.8 Construction Phase Impacts**

When potential construction stage effects are considered the alteration to straddle carriers and containers will not result in any changes to the construction stage landscape and visual effects predicted for the permitted development. The alteration to main berth and mooring dolphins are located in a well screened inner part of the existing port. These construction activities are broadly located in the same location, albeit spread across a wider part of the site with no noticeable landscape or visual change predicted due to screening from existing port facilities, the existing noise and visual barrier and the visual context of the construction activities in a busy port.

Similarly when potential construction stage effects are considered the alteration to entrance and interchange areas these activities will not result in any changes to the construction stage landscape and visual effects predicted for the permitted development. The construction activities will take place in very similar locations to the permitted development and the activities themselves remain the same.

When potential construction stage effects are considered for the alteration to the maintenance, office and customs building the majority of the construction activities are at low level and will be completely screened in most views particularly in views from Ringaskiddy where the recently erected noise and visual barrier and existing tree covers prevents such views currently. While the construction of the upper components of the maintenance building will be visible from some part of Ringaskiddy the works are well separated from the village and will be read in the context of the existing port and permitted development with slight adverse impact.

The construction phase will see no significant increase in traffic (HGV) coming and going from the site when compared to the permitted development.

When viewed from the wider landscape the visual impacts during the construction phase for the alterations will be slight adverse due to limited viewer exposure, phased and temporary nature of the works and low level of landscape and visual resource change.

## **7.6 Mitigation Measures**

### **7.6.1 Landscape Mitigations Measures**

As set out in section 7.5 the landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed alterations has not predicted any significant impacts.

The mitigation measures that formed part of the An Bord Pleanála approval of the permitted development of the Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment therefore do not require any changes and remain entirely appropriate.

## **7.7 Residual Impacts**

This section of the Chapter assesses the impact of the proposed alterations on the landscape character and visual receptors (previously identified in section 7.5 above), after the mitigation (described above in section 7.6) has been implemented.

No significant landscape or visual impacts have been predicted for the proposed alterations. The landscape mitigation measures enshrined in the extant approval for the Ringaskiddy Port Redevelopment remain unchanged by the proposed alterations.

Within the wider landscape the proposed alterations, as with the permitted development, will continue to blend with existing ship and port activities with no significant residual landscape character impacts. With regards to visual impact on sensitive receptors, impact on existing views will partly remain for some properties in Ringaskiddy in very close proximity but overall the visual impacts at dwellings are limited through time and the proposals will become a recognised feature of the local visual context.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The conclusion of this landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed alterations is that these modifications will not result in any significant change to the assessment of effects and conclusions as previously presented in the 2014 EIS for the permitted development and that the mitigation measures enshrined in the extant permission remain applicable.

In summary the broader landscape character area and visual context around Ringaskiddy Port area has the capacity to absorb the proposed alterations of this scale in landscape and visual terms in a similar manner to the extant permission.