

Memo

Subject: Landscape/ Tranquillity – ANCA RFI 12 and 13

Request for Information 12

Aircraft Noise Competent Authority Request:

The Applicant is requested to clarify whether effects on tranquillity in important designated landscapes have been considered. If so, the Applicant should clarify whether the additional overflying generally, and the additional overflying at night, create any tranquillity issues.

Applicant's Response:

In order to consider 'tranquillity' fully it would need to be defined and captured in a specific tranquillity mapping based on a robust methodology listing environmental components against which tranquillity can be measured and subsequently assessed. This would allow the Applicant to compare the existing / future baseline tranquillity with the tranquillity as it would be if the proposed Relevant Action were to be consented. The current Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023 does not provide a definition of tranquillity nor a mapping of tranquillity within designated 'Highly Sensitive Landscapes'. Consequently, the Applicant has not been able to carry out a full assessment on the effects on tranquillity in relation to designated 'Highly Sensitive Landscapes'.

In order to provide some information on the potential impact on tranquillity, the term tranquillity must be understood and defined.

Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023 contains a number of objectives in relation to 'Highly Sensitive Landscapes'. The most relevant in terms of 'tranquillity' is Objective NH34 stating the following:

"Ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, settlement pattern, historic heritage, local vernacular heritage, land-use and tranquillity".

The proposed Relevant Action will not physically impact on 'Highly Sensitive Landscapes'.

Guidelines and Background

The Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) publication 'Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of Specified Infrastructure Projects - Overarching Technical Document', PE-ENV-01101, December 2020 defines tranquillity as follows:

“Tranquillity e.g. sense of remoteness and isolation, or lack of it, within the landscape. This is often determined by the presence or absence of built development, human activity, infrastructure, and traffic. Background traffic noise can be a contributing factor to loss of tranquillity”.

The TII guidelines generally associate ‘tranquil’ areas with a sense of remoteness and the *“absence of negative elements (e.g. volumes of traffic, noise, dereliction, unmanaged areas)”*.

Further guidance is provided by the ‘Technical Information Note 01/2017 (Revised), Tranquillity – An overview’, March 2017 prepared by the Landscape Institute UK. It provides *“an overview of what is understood by the term ‘tranquillity’ within the landscape profession and to inform discussions and actions on the topic”*.

It acknowledges that there are various definitions in dictionaries explaining the meaning of ‘tranquillity’. The glossary of the 3rd Edition of the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)’, LI and IEMA 2013, define it as *“a state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape”*.

The Technical Information Note 01/2017 (Revised), ‘Tranquillity – An overview’, March 2017 provides additional context and background information as follows (emphasis added):

“In Wales, the definition of tranquillity that has been adopted by both Welsh Government (Welsh Government 2012) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW 2016a) is “An untroubled state, which is peaceful, calm and free from unwanted disturbances. This can refer to a state of mind or a particular environment. Tranquillity can be measured in terms of the absence of unwanted intrusions, or by a balancing of positive and negative factors. These include the presence of nature, feeling safe, visually pleasing surroundings and a relaxing atmosphere.”

Following from this ‘tranquil areas’ have been defined in experiential terms as ‘areas with the characteristics most likely to induce a state of tranquillity for people who are there’.

“Tranquil areas should not be confused with ‘quiet areas’ which are defined by the European Environmental Noise Directive (END; 2002/49/EC) as ‘those areas delimited by national authorities that are undisturbed by noise from traffic, industry or recreational activities’.”

“The interpretation of tranquillity is often linked to an association or engagement with the natural environment and it is this interpretation that places the term within the realms of landscape related study and research. Tranquillity is commonly associated with ‘wildness’ and ‘remoteness’ but it is widely recognised that none of these terms is synonymous.”

“Consistent with the definitions provided above, tranquillity cannot readily be defined as an environmental characteristic or quality as it is a state of mind that is being described and thus human perceptions as well as factual evidence must be considered in any studies relating to the term. Tranquillity is, in effect, an umbrella term used to refer to the effect of a range of environmental factors on our senses and our perception of a place.”

*“A distinction is made between **absolute tranquillity** and **relative tranquillity** ... For instance, **the tranquillity promoted by a summer sunrise on a calm day on top of a high mountain may be close to absolute, with almost no disturbance of any kind detracting from that state of mind. Yet the benefit to people of the relative tranquillity in an urban greenspace may be very high, despite intrusion from background traffic noise or the presence of many other people. Both sorts are important to recognise and value, but for different reasons, the commonality being the achievable state of mind rather than the environmental setting**”.*

Components of ‘Highly Sensitive Landscapes’

The following 3 areas of ‘Highly Sensitive Landscapes’ have been reviewed and are indicated in the figure overleaf:

- i. Kinsealy
- ii. Coast
- iii. Blanchardstown

Kinsealy

This area is located along the R107 and the L2055 / Baskin Lane and approximately 4km east, southeast of the proposed Relevant Action. It consists of large private estates with non-public significant greenbelts, a number of housing estates and commercial and educational facilities.

Coast

Relevant sections of this area include Malahide Castle, Malahide town centre, sections of Malahide Golf Club, Portmarnock, Portmarnock Golf Club and beach, Howth, large amounts of housing estates along the coastline and to either side of regional roads including the R105, R106, R107, R123 and R124,. This closest area to the Proposed Action is Malahide Castle at approximately 4km distance.

Blanchardstown

Relevant sections of this area include the M50 motorway, N3 dual Carriageway, Section of Elmgreen Golf Club, Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown, various large scale sporting facilities and remaining pockets of woodland, green fields with hedgerow boundaries including stands or clusters of trees. This area is located approximately 7km from the proposed Relevant Action.

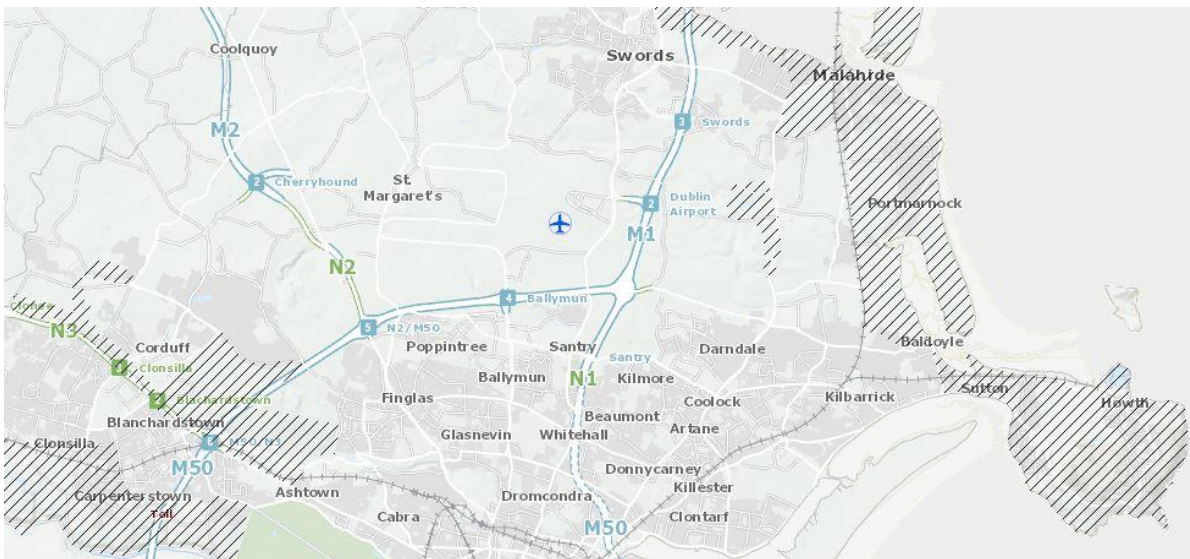


Figure 1 Relevant areas of Highly Sensitive Landscapes (Fingal Development Plan viewer, 2020)

There is a considerable variety of components within these designated landscapes including:

- Mixture of public and private use;
- Public access to the land or the lack of it;
- Location in relation to the proposed Relevant Action;
- The mixture of built-up, designed or natural landscapes; and
- Noise from traffic, air traffic, industry, or recreational activities.

The main receptor groups within these designated areas include the following:

- Residents;
- Vehicle Passengers;
- Pedestrians / Cyclists;
- Visitors / Tourists;
- Workers; and
- Students / pupils of educational facilities.

The proposed Relevant Action, if permitted, would allow flights to take off from and/or land on the North Runway for an additional two hours i.e. 23:00 to 00:00 and 05:59 to 07:00. Overall, this would allow for an increase in the number of flights taking off and/or landing at Dublin Airport between 23:00 and 07:00 over and above the number stipulated in the North Runway Planning Permission. The impact of the proposed Relevant Action will be an operational change, the net effect of which would be to facilitate recovery in the number of flights permitted to take off from, or land at, Dublin Airport at night in the Proposed Scenario compared with the Permitted Scenario.

A change to the tranquillity would relate to the additional visibility of aircraft during the proposed additional night-time and early morning hours. Considering the proposed time windows as stated above, the main receptor group likely experiencing a noticeable change in tranquillity would be residential receptors. Vehicle travellers, Pedestrians / Cyclists and Workers would be lesser affected.

Designated areas most affected by any visual change in the number of visible aircraft are 'Kinsealy' and 'Coast', as they are closer to the airport than receptors located in 'Blanchardstown', where aircraft may be discernible but are at a higher altitude than when closer to the airport.

The main change to the tranquillity in any area would be related to noise, which has been assessed separately by the relevant discipline. The impact on tranquillity resulting from additional aircraft visibility during the additional hour late at night and early in the morning can only be measured and assessed if there is an existing tranquillity mapping, which would provide an agreed definition of the term, factors relevant to measure tranquillity and a methodology for measuring and identifying tranquil places. Considering the lack of information available to date, the change of tranquillity due to the proposed Relevant Action cannot be comprehensively determined at this stage as it is not yet quantifiable.

Request for Information 13

Aircraft Noise Competent Authority Request:

The Applicant is requested to clarify whether there would be any change to lighting at night with the change to the Conditions, and if so, whether impacts of additional lighting have been considered.

Applicant's Response:

The proposed lighting scheme has not changed since the North Runway Planning Permission was granted, resulting in no additional / new landscape and visual effects. If the proposed Relevant Action is consented, safe operation of the runway system would entail lighting and approach lighting of the North Runway between 22:00 – 23:00 and also 05:59 – 07:00. Lighting of the runway is not considered in the EIAR because the net change between the Permitted and Proposed Scenarios is considered insignificant but the project description has been updated to clarify that the proposed change would be minimal.