

1 METHOD OF ASSESSING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section outlines the proposed method for assessing the significance of the potential environmental impacts. These include both operational and construction phase impacts.

For each impact, the EXTENT (spatial scale), MAGNITUDE and DURATION (time scale) would be described. These criteria would be used to ascertain the SIGNIFICANCE of the impact, firstly in the case of no mitigation and then with the most effective mitigation measure(s) in place. The mitigation would represent the full range of plausible and pragmatic measures but does not necessarily imply that they would be implemented.¹

The tables below show the scale used to assess these variables, and defines each of the rating categories.

Table 1 Assessment criteria for the evaluation of impacts

CRITERIA	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Extent or spatial influence of impact	Regional	Beyond a 5 km radius of the candidate site.
	Local	Within a 5 km radius of the candidate site.
	Site specific	On site or within 100 m of the candidate site.
Magnitude of impact (at the indicated spatial scale)	High	Natural and/ or social functions and/ or processes are <i>severely</i> altered
	Medium	Natural and/ or social functions and/ or processes are <i>notably</i> altered
	Low	Natural and/ or social functions and/ or processes are <i>slightly</i> altered
	Very Low	Natural and/ or social functions and/ or processes are <i>negligibly</i> altered
	Zero	Natural and/ or social functions and/ or processes remain <i>unaltered</i>
Duration of impact	Construction period	Up to 2 years
	Short Term	Up to 5 years after construction
	Medium Term	5-15 years after construction
	Long Term	More than 15 years after construction

The SIGNIFICANCE of an impact is derived by taking into account the temporal and spatial scales and magnitude. The means of arriving at the different significance ratings is explained in **Table 2**.

¹ The applicant will be requested to indicate at before submission of the final report which alternative and mitigation measures they are prepared to implement.

Table 2 Definition of significance ratings

SIGNIFICANCE RATINGS	LEVEL OF CRITERIA REQUIRED
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High magnitude with a regional extent and long term duration High magnitude with either a regional extent and medium term duration or a local extent and long term duration Medium magnitude with a regional extent and long term duration
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High magnitude with a local extent and medium term duration High magnitude with a regional extent and construction period or a site specific extent and long term duration High magnitude with either a local extent and construction period duration or a site specific extent and medium term duration Medium magnitude with any combination of extent and duration except site specific and construction period or regional and long term Low magnitude with a regional extent and long term duration
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High magnitude with a site specific extent and construction period duration Medium magnitude with a site specific extent and construction period duration Low magnitude with any combination of extent and duration except site specific and construction period or regional and long term Very low magnitude with a regional extent and long term duration
Very low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low magnitude with a site specific extent and construction period duration Very low magnitude with any combination of extent and duration except regional and long term
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero magnitude with any combination of extent and duration

Once the significance of an impact has been determined, the PROBABILITY of this impact occurring as well as the CONFIDENCE in the assessment of the impact, would be determined using the rating systems outlined in **Table 3** and **Table 4** respectively. It is important to note that the significance of an impact should always be considered in concert with the probability of that impact occurring. Lastly, the REVERSIBILITY of the impact is estimated using the rating system outlined in **Table 5**.

Table 3 Definition of probability ratings

PROBABILITY RATINGS	CRITERIA
Definite	Estimated greater than 95 % chance of the impact occurring.
Probable	Estimated 5 to 95 % chance of the impact occurring.
Unlikely	Estimated less than 5 % chance of the impact occurring.

Table 4 Definition of confidence ratings

CONFIDENCE RATINGS	CRITERIA
Certain	Wealth of information on and sound understanding of the environmental factors potentially influencing the impact.
Sure	Reasonable amount of useful information on and relatively sound understanding of the environmental factors potentially influencing the impact.
Unsure	Limited useful information on and understanding of the environmental factors potentially influencing this impact.

Table 5 Definition of reversibility ratings

REVERSIBILITY RATINGS	CRITERIA
Irreversible	The activity will lead to an impact that is in all practical terms permanent.
Reversible	The impact is reversible within 2 years after the cause or stress is removed.