

South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015



VOLUME TWO

APPENDIX 10, 11 & 12

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South Tipperary County Council





VOLUME TWO

APPENDIX 10 Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement

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South Tipperary County Council



SEA Statement

Introduction

This document is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for the South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015, as required under Article 9(1) of the SEA Directive and with section 13(l) (1) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. 436. This document identifies how the SEA process was taken into account by, and influenced, the Plan-making process.

Purpose of SEA Statement

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to provide information on the decision-making process and to document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees and other submissions received during the consultation phases have been taken into account in the adopted Plan and the arrangements put in place for monitoring. It illustrates how decisions were taken, making the process more transparent.

The SEA Statement includes the following information:

- Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
- Summary of how submissions received during consultation have been taken into account in the Plan;
- Reasons for choosing the recommended strategy, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered;
- Measures that are to be undertaken to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan.

SEA Directive

The EU Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA (Directive 2002/42/EC) came into force in July 2001 and requires Member States of the EU to assess the likely significant¹ environmental effects of plans and programmes prior to their adoption thus providing for the assessment of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage of the decision making process.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

“The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.”

The Directive came into effect in an Irish context in July 2004 and was transposed into Irish law through the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 436 and the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 435.

Summary of SEA Process

The South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015 has been subject to a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which included the following key steps:

1) Scoping and Statutory Consultation

Scoping involves an initial assessment of the relevant environmental issues requiring a more detailed assessment and thereby requiring careful consideration in the Environmental Report and ultimately in the Development Plan. By highlighting the issues at an early stage it ensures that the issues are firmly to the forefront when considering each of the plan's policies and objectives and reduces the possibility of relevant issues not being addressed.

¹ “Significant Effects” – These effects include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

The scoping aspect involved consultation with the statutory consultees, affording each an opportunity to comment on the highlighted issues and the proposed methodology. They include:

- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and
- The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The scoping report was forwarded to the aforementioned on the 19th of November 2008. Furthermore the scoping report was also forwarded to the neighbouring counties of Cork, Kilkenny, North Tipperary, Waterford and Limerick.

2) Environmental Assessment and Preparation of Environmental Report

The preparation of an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects on the environment of the Proposed Plan included consideration of:

- An outline of the content and main objectives of the South Tipperary County Development Plan and the relationship between this and other relevant plans or programmes;
- The environmental characteristics of the area affected by the plan;
- Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC (Directive for the Conservation of Wild Birds) and 92/43/EEC (Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora);
- The environmental protection objectives, established at International, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
- The likely significant effects on the environment, including issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage and landscape;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;
- An outline of the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;
- A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10;
- A non technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.

The purpose of the Environmental Report was to assess the likely environmental implications or consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth in the Plan area. The Environmental Report was presented as a separate document to the Plan, however both documents should be read in conjunction with each other.

Amendments made to the Draft Plan at each stage of the process were assessed in terms of their environmental impacts and the results were presented to the Elected Members. At each stage of the process the Elected Members were required by legislation to take into account the Environmental Report before the adoption of the Plan.

3) Statutory Consultation on Proposed Plan and Environmental Report

The Draft Environmental Report and Draft South Tipperary County Development Plan were made available for public viewing and submissions or observations were invited from the Environmental Authorities, the Prescribed Bodies and the general public from the 21st of April to the 30th of June 2008.

Following on from this phase of the process, the submissions were reviewed and compiled in a Manager's Report which discussed the main issues in each submission; proposed a response to the issues raised and made a recommendation to the Elected Members for amendments to the Draft

Development Plan and the Draft Environmental Report. The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, requires that such Material Amendments be made available for public consultation.

The proposed Material Amendments to the Draft County Development Plan 2009-2015, the Draft Environmental Report and the Draft Appropriate Assessment were put on public display on Monday the 17th of November 2008 until Monday 15th December 2008. During the 4 week public consultation period a total of 22 written submissions/observations were received by the Planning Authority.

Following consideration of the submissions the County Manager produced a report on the proposed Material Amendments for deliberation by the Elected Members. Consequently the South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015 was adopted on the 9th of February 2009 and will take full effect from that date.

4) Preparation of SEA Statement

This is the final stage in the Strategic Environmental Assessment process and is contained within this document.

How Environmental Considerations were integrated into the Plan

The environment has been considered during the preparation of the Plan and throughout its development. This was demonstrated and documented in the Environmental Report.

Firstly, at the outset of the process a number of environmental issues were identified as of concern and requiring particular attention in the Plan. The issues raised were:

- Biodiversity;
- Landscape and Visual Amenity; and
- Water quality.

Biodiversity

A number of areas within South Tipperary have been designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA's) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) and are therefore protected under National and European legislation.

These areas contain vulnerable, rare and threatened species of wild fauna and flora and wildlife habitats and it is essential that the environmental report have regard to these areas and the Plan must have due regard to their long term protection and enhancement.

In response the following measures were proposed at the outset of the Plan's preparation with further policies proposed in Chapter 6 of the County Development Plan:

AEH 6	Designated Environmental Sites - It is the policy of the Council to maintain the quality of designated environmental sites and when assessing proposals will provide for the protection, conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and designated sites.
AEH 7	Water Environment - It is the policy of the Council to preserve an undisturbed edge or buffer zone between new developments and river corridors and other water bodies in order to maintain the natural functions of existing ecosystems and to encourage increased public access and enhance water-related recreation opportunities.

Water quality

The surface and ground water quality of the county has witnessed considerable pressure over the course of the previous County Development Plan (2003-2009) period as a consequence of the substantial rise in the quantity of development being experienced across the County. It was considered that specific policy should be provided to ensure that development can be facilitated by the Development Plan while also ensuring that there are suitable checks in place to ensure that the water quality of the area improves rather than deteriorates over the lifetime of the Plan.

In response the following measures were proposed at the outset of the Plan's preparation with further policies proposed in Chapters 6 and 7 of the Plan:

AEH 8	Groundwater Protection -It is the policy of the Council to protect groundwater resources and drinking water catchments having regard to the South Tipperary Ground Water Protection Scheme 1998 (as amended) and Environmental Protection Agency guidelines applicable at the time.
AEH 9	Waste Water Treatment and Disposal - It is the policy of the Council to implement the Urban Waste Water Regulations, the relevant River Basin Management Plans and EU requirements, and will take account of the drainage system and the quality and quantity of receiving waters in the area when assessing development proposals. Proposals will be required to comply with the development management standards set out in Chapter 9 of the Draft County Development Plan.
INF 6	Surface Water - The Council will seek the implementation of rainwater harvesting, SUDS and best practice guidance for the collection and reuse or disposal and treatment of surface water. Such systems will be required to conserve water, protect water quality and regulate the rate of surface water runoff so as not to cause or exacerbate flooding on the relevant site or elsewhere.

Landscape and Visual Amenities

Scenic views can be found across the Plan area and the Plan must address the preservation of such areas in the long term. The previous County Development Plan (2003-2009) identified views and prospects where natural beauty can be enjoyed and it is important that the effectiveness of the existing policies relating to these areas is assessed and the areas designated for protection should be revised where appropriate. It is recognized that inappropriate development can negatively impact on views, prospects and the quality of the landscape and the Plan should reflect the recommendations of the Landscape Character Assessment Phase 1.

In response the following measures were proposed at the outset of the Plan's preparation with further policies proposed in Chapter 6 of the Plan:

AEH 4	Primary and Secondary Amenity Areas - It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance the visual quality of primary and secondary amenity areas. The scale, design and siting of new developments shall enhance this visual quality.
AEH 5	Protected Assets: Views and Trees - It is the policy of the Council to protect views of special amenity value and mature trees as set out respectively in Appendix 6 and Appendix 8 of the Draft County Development Plan.

Secondly, a number of 'Threats and Trends' were discussed in relation to each of the environmental receptors. Acknowledging the need to address these issues a series of mitigation measures were proposed in order to reduce or indeed eliminate potential impacts. The following were proposed.

PROPOSED RESPONSES TO 'THREATS' RAISED DURING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT.			
Topic	Identified Threat	Proposed Policy Response	
Human Beings	The emergence of the Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing (GoSRH) has seen the emergence of many more applications and permissions for one-off housing in the countryside, with potential implications for the rural environment particularly groundwater quality and visual impact..	SS5	It is the policy of this Council to facilitate individual houses in the open countryside at locations removed from the following pressure areas; a) Areas identified as Primary/Secondary Amenity Areas as referred to in Chapter 6 and illustrated in the Appendices of the Draft County Development Plan; b) National Primary, National Secondary and Regional Roads; c) On the approach roads to Towns and Villages; and d) On local roads where there is an existing pattern of ribbon development as set out in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005 (DEHLG) and any amendment thereof And where the following criteria are met a) The proposal is for an individual house; and b) It is being made by any one of the following persons a farmer of the land a direct descendent of (i) above (sons, daughters or one special niece/nephew or grandchild) a person who has lived in the open countryside, outside of the Service Centres, within 10km of the proposed location for any 10 year period of that person's life c)The house design, siting and layout is in accordance with the Rural Design Guide for Individual Houses in the Countryside as set out in Appendix 4; and d)The house is for that person's own use; and e) The applicant can reasonably demonstrate that he/she has a housing need and is eligible under the above criteria An exception may only be made in Amenity Areas, on Agriculturally zoned land within settlements, on approach roads to towns and villages and on Regional Roads where: the proposal is for an individual house; and it is being made by any one of the following persons; a farmer of the land a direct descendent of i) above it is not possible to locate the house on other lands within the family landholding and outside the pressure area; and the house design, siting and layout is in accordance with the Rural Design Guide for Individual Houses in the Countryside as set out in Appendix 4; and the house is for that persons own use; and the applicant has a housing need; and the applicant can demonstrate that he/she is eligible under the above criteria the proposed development will not prejudice the potential future development of the landholding.

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	Challenges for the future include the retention of the younger age cohorts within the County and encouraging those who work within the County to live within it also.	SS1	Settlement Strategy - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council shall prioritise the allocation of funding towards consolidating settlements and ensuring appropriate amenity, environmental and community facilities are provided in association with economic, commercial and service infrastructure with the key objective of building sustainable communities throughout the County. The Council will seek environmental, community and infrastructural improvements in settlements, where appropriate, to ensure that they become attractive settlement centres and assist in the long term vitality and viability of rural South Tipperary. The Council will seek to obtain a 20% share of the South-East Region's population with a targeted distribution of the County's population at 40% in the Primary and Secondary Service Centres, 20% in the District Service Centres and 40% in the Local Service Centres, Settlement Nodes and the open countryside.
Flora and Fauna	Designated areas such as NHAs, SACs and SPA are important features which require a concerted effort to protect them. These areas will form the basis of controlled development within the county and severe restrictions imposed on further development which may adversely impact on the overall integrity of the protected area.	AEH 6	Designated Environmental Sites - It is the policy of the Council to maintain the quality of designated environmental sites and when assessing proposals will provide for the protection, conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and designated sites.
Water Quality	Threats to surface and ground water are increased through one-off dwellings and their reliance on conventional septic tanks in certain areas. In certain areas the soil's poor percolation characteristics render them unsuitable for conventional septic tank methods of domestic effluent disposal.		See SS5 above
	Most of South Tipperary is located within the South Eastern River Basin District and work is on-going on preparing River Basin Management Plans. It is anticipated the Plans will be published in December 2008 and following public consultation, the final plans will be adopted by the relevant Local Authorities in December 2009.	AEH9	Waste Water Treatment and Disposal - It is the policy of the Council to implement the Urban Waste Water Regulations, the relevant River Basin Management Plans and EU requirements, and will take account of the drainage system and the quality and quantity of receiving waters in the area when assessing development proposals. Proposals will be required to comply with the development management standards set out in Chapter 9 of the Draft County Development Plan

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	In 2001 the County Tipperary (South Riding) Groundwater Protection Scheme was published and is used as a planning tool which takes into account the aquifer type, groundwater vulnerability, and protection of particular sources. EU and Irish legislation require that all groundwater be protected, so the scheme protects both the sources and the resource. The main objective of the scheme is to control development so as to prevent contamination/pollution of water resources. It highlighted 5 sources of water in the county that were found to be frequently contaminated by bacteria: Ballinver, Tulliohea, Mullenbawn, Poulatar and Poulalee.	AEH8	Groundwater Protection - It is the policy of the Council to protect groundwater resources and drinking water catchments having regard to the South Tipperary Ground Water Protection Scheme 1998 (as amended) and Environmental Protection Agency guidelines applicable at the time.
	The Office of Public Works, in consultation with the Department of the Environment Heritage & Local Government and other relevant stakeholders, are in the process of preparing comprehensive guidelines to enable Planners to contribute substantially to the management of flooding related issues. Pending completion of these guidelines, the decision has been taken to release the initial draft guidelines "Flood Risk & Development - Suggested policy/ Guidelines for inclusion in Development plans". These guidelines are not exhaustive, but do set out the key issues for consideration when assessing planning issues and development control in areas that might be subject to flood risk.	INF6	Surface Water - The Council will seek the implementation of rainwater harvesting, SUDS and best practice guidance for the collection and reuse or disposal and treatment of surface water. Such systems will be required to conserve water, protect water quality and regulate the rate of surface water runoff so as not to cause or exacerbate flooding on the relevant site or elsewhere.
		INF7	Flood Risk Assessment - The Council will require a comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment for proposals in an area at risk of flooding, adjoining same or where cumulative impacts may result in a flood risk elsewhere.
Air quality	Dioxin emissions released as a result of individual households burning rubbish has been highlighted as a problem at a national level, although no information is available at a County level.		
Material Assets	Waste management facilities in the region are insufficient to meet national and European targets.	INF14	Waste Management - The Council will promote minimisation of waste through source reduction, producer responsibility and public awareness. The Council will implement the policies and objectives of the Joint Waste Management Plan for the South East Region.
	The new licensing system which will be policed by the Environmental Protection Agency will set strict limits on discharges allowed from WWT plants into surface waters such as rivers, canals and lakes and groundwater.	AEH9	Waste Water Treatment and Disposal - It is the policy of the Council to implement the Urban Waste Water Regulations, the relevant River Basin Management Plans and EU requirements, and will take account of the drainage system and the quality and quantity of receiving waters in the area when assessing development

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			proposals. Proposals will be required to comply with the development management standards set out in Chapter 9 of the Draft County Development Plan
Landscape and Visual	Due to their relatively poor agricultural characteristics, a substantial portion of the poorer quality soils have been subject to afforestation, with substantial and long-term visual impacts. However, the forestry industry has now turned toward the use of more productive soils. The implications of this trend have yet to become apparent, but may include the proliferation of non-managed exotic monoculture forestry tracts in previous permanent pasture regions and large areas of acidified soils.	SEO4	It is an objective of the Council to carry out a review of the Tipperary Land Use and Economic Strategy during the life of the Draft County Development Plan.
	Visual issues relating to the development of housing in the open countryside.	HSG 4	Design of Individual Houses - It is the policy of the Council to ensure that all new individual houses in the Open Countryside, including the refurbishment and extension of existing structures, are sited, designed and landscaped having regard to the criteria outlined in the Rural Design Guide for Individual Houses in the Countryside set out in Appendix 4 of the Draft County Development Plan.
		AEH5	Protected Assets: Views and Trees - It is the policy of the Council to protect views of special amenity value and mature trees as set out respectively in Appendix 6 and Appendix 8 of the Draft County Development Plan.
Cultural Heritage	Cultural Heritage, including all its various elements, represents a finite resource, one which must be protected in order to enrich future generations. Thus, development which is deemed to adversely on structures, features, historical areas etc will not be permitted. A proactive approach will be adopted by the local authority who will continue to work with the various state agencies and departments as well as stakeholders ensure the ongoing protection of this element of the environment.	AEH 10	Access and Public Rights of Way - It is the policy of the Council to preserve and protect existing rights of way and create new access routes to amenity areas and facilities as the opportunity or need arises and will seek to establish a meaningful network throughout the county.
		AEH 11	Protected Structures - It is the policy of the Council to conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures that are of special interest and when considering proposals will have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities and relevant Conservation and Management Plans where applicable. The Council will proactively work with developers/applicants to facilitate the appropriate reuse/redevelopment of Protected Structures.
		AEH 12	Architectural Conservation Areas - It is the policy of the Council to conserve and enhance the special character of the ACA's included in this plan. The special character includes its traditional building stock and material finishes, spaces, streetscape, landscape and setting.

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		AEH 13	Archaeology - It is the policy of the Council to safeguard sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally and will protect (in-situ where practicable or as a minimum, preservation by record) all monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places and of sites, features and objects of archaeological and historical interest generally.
		AEH 14	South Tipperary Heritage Plan - It is the policy of the Council to implement the key objectives and associated actions identified in the South Tipperary Heritage Plan 2004-2008 and any revision thereof.

Mitigation Measures

It has been demonstrated in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report that the overall impact of the proposed development strategy for the County will, in general, have a neutral to positive impact on the environmental receptors. While this remains the case, key measures, including both mitigating and enhancement have been highlighted in Chapter 8 of the Environmental Report. These mitigation measures are designed to enhance the local environment and to prevent potential adverse impacts.

In general terms, all proposals for development will be required to have due regard to the environmental considerations outlined in the County Development Plan 2009-2015. Proposals for development which are deemed contrary to the objectives and policies contained within the Plan will not normally be permitted, and if permitted, not without the appropriate site and development specific mitigation measures.

The Council have given an undertaking to implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and will embark on the measures proposed in the Environmental Report.

Environmental Report and Submissions & Observations

This section details how submissions and observations made to the planning authority were taken into account during the preparation of the plan on the Draft County Development Plan and Draft Environmental Report. However at the outset, the scoping exercise was undertaken to establish the scope and extent of the Environmental Report and to list environmental issues which would require further consideration during the SEA process. The statutory consultees were asked to provide comment on the scoping report, however, no comments were received at that particular stage, however subsequent to the Draft Plan and Environmental Report a number of submissions were received from the statutory consultees. These are discussed further below.

Submissions and Observations

As stated above, there were two periods of public consultation on the Draft Plan and accompanying Environmental Report. Firstly the draft Plan and Environmental Report went on display on the 21st of May 2008 and comments/observations/submissions invited. At this stage of the process a total of 231 submissions were received. While the majority of the submissions were mainly concerned with land zonings, other concerns raised included community concerns, village housing, heritage, an overall vision for South Tipperary, transportation networks and employment/enterprise.

Each of the 231 submissions/observations received were assessed and a detailed consideration of the submissions was carried out, culminating in the development of the Manager's Report on this phase of the consultation process. Furthermore, during this phase of the preparation of the Development Plan particular emphasis was given to the assessment of submissions that referred specifically to the Environmental Report. In all four submissions were made with reference to the Draft Environmental Report. These were made by:

- 1) Michael Owens, Scientific Officer, Environmental Research Centre, Office of Environmental Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, Cork.
- 2) Ms. Nora Keneghan, Spatial Policy Section, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Custom House, Dublin .
- 3) Protect Cloneen Community Group, c/o Potter & Finn, Chartered Consulting Engineers, King's Square, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork
- 4) Mr Myles Balfe, c/o Catherine Mara, John Duffy Architecture, 23-24 The Crescent, Monkstown, Co. Dublin

Arising from a review of these submissions a number of amendments were proposed for inclusion in the Report and these has been incorporated in the final Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report. A summary is provided below.

1) Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA raised a number of issues relating to the draft Development Plan and Environmental Report. Arising from a detailed review of this submission, a number of amendments were proposed and included in the final Environmental report. Most notably the following are highlighted.

The following was added to Chapter 8:

"The Council will implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and will undertake the measures proposed in the Environmental Report."

Furthermore, the EPA suggested that a direct link between the issues of concern raised at the outset of the Plan's preparation and the corresponding mitigation measures is included in the Environmental report. On this recommendation two tables were proposed for insertion at the end of Chapter 7 of the Environmental Report. The tables highlight how the issues identified at the outset of the Plan's preparation and those identified during the process were addressed. These tables reflect the overall integration of the Plan and the Environmental Report and demonstrate how significant issues have been addressed and mitigated for during the process of preparing the plan. These tables have been reproduced and included in the section entitled "How environmental considerations were incorporated into the plan making process, see page 5 of this statement.

In relation to monitoring of the Plan's implantation, the following text was added to Chapter 9 - Monitoring (Page 60):

The implementation of the Draft Plan will be monitored and upon its adoption the local authority will investigate the formation of a review committee to oversee and report on the monitoring aspect of the plan. Once established the committee will gather information from the various departments of the local authority and others whose remit is to monitor environmental receptors, for example the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Regional Fisheries Board.

2) *Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.*

The Department raised a number of issues relating to the draft Development Plan and Environmental Report. Arising from a detailed review of this submission, a number of amendments were proposed and included in the final Environmental report. The following are highlighted.

The following was added to Chapter 8 of the Environmental Report (Mitigation Measures) dealing with the Soil and Geology Environment.

When considering proposals associated with the extractive industry, the Council require the developer to outline compliance with the Quarry Planning Guidelines 2004, the Code of Practice between the Irish Concrete Federation and the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaelteacht and the Islands 2002, the Irish Concrete Federation Environmental Code 2005 and the Guidelines for Environmental Management in the Extractive Sector 2006 (or any revision to the above documents).

3) *Protect Cloneen Community Group*

A number of points were raised by the Cloneen Community Group, most notably arising from a review of the submission the following was incorporated into the Environmental Report.

“The Council will implement the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and will undertake the measures proposed in the Environmental Report.”

4) *Mr Myles Balfe*

The final submission in relation to the Draft Environmental Report concerned re-zoning a 3.12 hectare parcel of land located to the north of Newcastle Village new residential use. Upon a review of the particulars of the site it was ascertained that the site was prone to periodic flooding and generally unsuitable for the erection of permanent structures. As a result it was determined that the existing zoning for amenity use should remain.

Finally, proposed amendments to the Draft County Development Plan as a result of submissions received have been considered in detail as part of the SEA process and each proposed amendment has been assessed for its potential impact on its receiving environment. Where appropriate, recommendations have been made regarding amendments for inclusion in the Draft Environmental Report and Draft Plan.

The second stage of the consultation phase began on the 17th of November 2008 and was completed on the 15th December 2008 and a total of 22 submissions were received. These were in relation to proposed changes arising from the first phase of the consultation stage. Again while most of these submissions related to land zonings a detailed submission was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Southern Regional Fisheries Board. Again, the submissions were reviewed and amendments to the Draft County Development Plan were proposed for inclusion where appropriate. However neither submission related specifically to the Draft Environmental Report and therefore no amendments to the Report were required.

Alternatives

Introduction

The issue of alternatives is necessary in assessing the overall philosophy of the Development Plan. In accordance with the guidelines the alternatives put forward in this section are realistic and capable of implementation. The following is taken directly from the Environmental Report, Chapter 6.

It is useful to identify the central vision of the plan, which is to *'have an inclusive economy and an excellent quality of life. It will be a place where all families and individuals can prosper. South Tipperary will balance the demands of a vibrant economy with the demands of a healthy and sustainable environment'*. Thus, in broad terms, the plan should be based on the principles of sustainable development and should be promoted in accordance with national and regional guidelines.

In relation to South County Tipperary, sustainable development can be achieved through the promotion and maintenance of viable urban and rural communities, concentrating investment in good quality infrastructure, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the preserving the quality and character of the natural and man-made environment.

At the outset of the County Development Plan process, a number of development scenarios were highlighted based on the current and predicted future needs of the County. In broad terms the scenarios were grouped into three viable and differing approaches. Each scenario has a differing outcome and these are discussed further below. The alternatives considered are broadly defined as:

- Option 1 – Non Planned– Non-restrictive (Worst Case);
- Option 2 – Guidance Only – Open for consideration, Developer led; and
- Option 3 – Planned – coordinated and managed - sustainable.

The Options

The Local Authority recognizes that the population of the county is likely to increase over the coming years. National and Regional population projections estimate that the population of South Tipperary will increase by between 20,000 and 33,000 up to 2020. The local authority has a duty to plan for this increase and to set out how it can be suitably accommodated within the county. Allied to this is the provision of essential services and appropriate infrastructure to facilitate both the existing and future population needs and to ensure employment opportunities exist through economic development or activity.

Option 1: Non-Planned

The non-planned approach to the future development of South Tipperary can be viewed as the 'worst-case' scenario. In order to develop under this scenario, the Planning Authority would allow for development to proceed in an ad hoc manner at any location within its functional area. The scenario envisages potentially inappropriate lands around settlements zoned for development without truly assessing the overall need for, or scale of development. As a result development pressure both on the fringes of towns and villages as well as in the open countryside would result. Consequently development would occur in unserved or insufficiently served areas. This policy would not require careful consideration of the environmental impacts of such development, either individually or cumulatively. There would be few or no restrictions on development.

While this alternative would allow for development and would provide some short term economic benefits to the county, it is not sustainable and therefore not a viable or acceptable alternative in practice. Such development is uncontrolled and essentially developer-led but without the key infrastructure in place. This option would result in the development of the county through market forces in an unsustainable manner. The physical and socio-economic characteristics would at best remain as they are, though deterioration is more likely. This scenario takes a short term view of developing the county with no consideration of the long term negative impacts.

This weak planning approach would have the following results:

- A deterioration in the rural landscape and natural environment;
- No clearly definable settlement strategy;
- Promoting development at any location throughout the county;

- Serious traffic congestion and disruption to existing residents throughout the county;
- Inadequate environmental measures, leading to a sub-standard environmental quality;
- Impact negatively on the visual amenity and potential of the County area; and
- Domination of market forces resulting in piecemeal development and a weak socio-economic county structure.

Option 2: Guidance Only

The 'Guidance Only' scenario sets forth the preferred development strategy for the County as envisaged by the County Council. However the implementation of the Plan is somewhat lacklustre and would only be viewed as the preferred approach but not the enforceable approach. This scenario favours the developer, though some control is still exerted by the local authority. While development in broad terms will be directed to certain areas, a significant level of flexibility will be employed when considering development in other areas, particularly in sensitive parts of the county. In much the same way as the weak approach, the future development of the county would be haphazard and somewhat uncontrolled, allowing others to dictate the location and scale of development. The result would likely include:

- Reasonable quantity of development within the county, in line with predictions;
- Poor control on development;
- Lack of long term focus; and
- Poor environmental protection.

Option 3: Planned.

A planned approach to the approval of acceptable development within the county will enable development to be targeted to key areas in a sustainable and managed way. This approach ensures that the predicted growth is accommodated in a planned and orderly manner. Ultimately the core issue of sustainability is addressed and significantly a balance between development and environmental protection is enshrined in the plan. Thus, this approach is a long term vision for the County.

The planned approach will result in the implementation of the Settlement Strategy as outlined by the County Council and the targeting of new employment in key areas. The plan will identify key areas for future growth and will ultimately zone appropriate lands around established settlements thereby promoting their long term sustainability. Furthermore, the linkages between key development areas and strategic transport links to other regions outside of the county will be preserved. This will ultimately promote the long term viability of the identified development nodes.

Severely restrictive policies towards development in highly defined sensitive areas such as those listed as NHA, SPA, SAC or indeed those areas highlighted as being sensitive in terms of ground water resource protection or visually sensitive will apply. Under this scenario the following results are envisaged:

- Implementation of Settlement Strategy and promotion of key settlements;
- Key areas for growth will be identified and promoted;
- Strategic or key routes and linkages will be identified and preserved;
- There will be a high level of environmental protection;
- Valuable natural resources such as water quality are protected; and
- The rural economy and social networks are supported.

Matrix – Assessment of the Options

	Environmental Assessment of the Alternatives								
									
Option 1 – Non-Planned	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Option 2 – Guidance Only	✗	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Option 3 – Planned	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Conclusion

The South Tipperary County Development Plan seeks to balance development with environmental protection and conservation, the sustainable approach. The matrix shows that Option 1, adopting a Non-Planned approach, allowing development of all areas with little control exerted, will present significant environmental problems and will be contrary to the principles of sustainable development. This option would not allow for the orderly and sustainable development of the county and is therefore not considered as a desirable option for South Tipperary.

Similarly Option 2, the ‘Guidance Only’ approach, is not a desirable option. While the Local Authority may set forth its preferred strategy for the future development of the County, it is for guidance purposes only. This option would not realise the long term vision for the County and may instead result in poor environmental protection and ad hoc, unsustainable development.

Option 3 allows for planned development and represents a sustainable approach to planning in the County. Development will be focused within zoned and serviced areas. Significant restrictions will be put in place to development in areas designated for environmental purposes such as NHA, SAC and SPA as well as areas of archaeological importance or where threats to natural resources prevail, such as ground and surface waters.

In conclusion a planned approach to the further development of the county incorporating the principles of sustainable development is the option best suited to South County Tipperary.

Monitoring

Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the County Manager is required to prepare a progress report on the implementation of the plan. The environment is a significant consideration and the progress report will include the key findings of the environmental monitoring programme as outlined in this chapter of the SEA.

The implementation of the Plan will be monitored and upon its adoption the local authority will investigate the formation of a review committee to oversee and report on the monitoring aspect of the plan. Once established the committee will gather information from the various departments of the local authority and others whose remit is to monitor environmental receptors, for example the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Regional Fisheries Board.

Monitoring of the County Development Plan and its implications on the environment is paramount to ensure that the environment of the county is not adversely affected through the plans implementation. Under Article 10 of the SEA Directive monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan *“in order to, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”* The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Guidelines on SEA recommends that monitoring does not require new research activity; existing sources of information can be used and the task of data collection can be shared.

While considerable environmental data is directly available to the Council such as water quality, recycling rates etc, other sources of information will be accessed to provide a comprehensive view of the effect of the Plan. In this regard the Local Authority will work with other agencies with environmental mandates to gather data for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of the Plan. Therefore, while monitoring specific elements of the environment is not strictly the preserve of the Council, the Council will continue to liaise and work with the Environmental Protection Agency, The National Parks and Wildlife Service, The Fisheries Board, as well as others in the pursuit of environmental conservation and protection through existing environmental monitoring procedures.

It is proposed, in accordance with the Directive, to base monitoring on a series of indicators which measure changes in the environment, especially changes which are critical in terms of environmental quality, for example water or air pollution levels. The indicators have been prepared specifically for the South Tipperary County Development Plan, tailored to reflect the issues of major concern in the area. Guidance has however been provided on the formulation of the indicators from the EPA report *“Environment in Focus 2006 – Environmental Indicators for Ireland”*. The indicators aim to simplify complex interrelationships and provide information about environmental issues which easily understood.

Furthermore, the proposed monitoring programme allows for the collection of data relevant to the ongoing monitoring of the plan’s implementation. It is proposed to investigate the feasibility of forming a monitoring review committee in order to collate and assessed data. The monitoring programme will therefore be expanded upon during the lifetime of the plan and will form the basis of the next baseline assessment for the SEA.

Conclusion

The Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out by South Tipperary County Council during the preparation of the South Tipperary County Development Plan has ensured that any potential significant environmental impacts of the Plan's implementation were identified and that they have been given consideration. Throughout the preparation of the South Tipperary County Development Plan and Environmental Report consultation has taken place which has contributed to the final adopted Plan and enhanced its overall environmental protection dimension.

Although the Plans have now been adopted, the SEA process will continue with the monitoring of environmental impacts of the implementation of the Plan. This will include ongoing monitoring and publication of progress reports over the lifetime of the Plan.