

Chapter Ten – Overall Findings of the Assessment

The Draft County Development Plan for South Tipperary, its policies and objectives as set out by the local authority, are key to the future sustainable development of the county. The Plan aims to balance the needs of the future population with the preservation and conservation of environment in which that population will live, work and play. The plan therefore has a strong focus towards the concept of sustainability.

The chosen development philosophy as set out in the Plan and summarised in Chapter 6, has been assessed in terms of its overall sustainability and its potential to impact on the environment. The policies and objectives of the Plan were assessed against the environmental objectives and the results indicate that the full implementation of the plan will not result in a negative or adverse impact on the environmental resources within the county. It has been shown in this report (Appendix 1) that almost all of the Plans policies and objectives are consistent with this summary and that in general the Plan will have a neutral to positive impact on the environment as a whole.

Where there is the potential for negative impacts, mitigation as well as enhancement measures have been identified. The implementation of these measures, coupled with the monitoring procedures will ensure the proposed County Development Plan is acceptable from an environmental perspective.

Environmental Issues

At the outset of the assessment process, a number of environmental issues were identified, principally biodiversity, water quality, landscape preservation and soil quality. These issues have been at the fore of the thinking behind the Plan and measures proposed to deal with them.

Biodiversity is an important aspect of the county's environment and contributes to its identity. There are a number of areas protected under EU and National legislation and the local authority will be proactive in ensuring that such sites are offered the level of protection which they deserve. Ultimately development within these areas will not be permitted under normal conditions and any application for development within an environmentally designated site will be referred to the Development applications Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for comment.

Preserving water quality, both ground and surface resources is a keen consideration in assessing the sustainability of the Plan. Water quality or indeed a deterioration in water quality has a number of implications, not just for human health, but also on the wildlife that requires clean water. To this end, the local authority will not allow development which may result in a deleterious impact on receiving waters, either ground or surface. Cumulatively, the proliferation of septic tanks can potentially impact on groundwater resources with implications for the future abstraction of such resources. All proposals for housing which includes the use of septic tanks will be required to conform to EPA standards on design and installation. Any new guidance on septic tank design which comes into force over the lifetime of the plan will be implemented within the county and any application for a house plus septic tank will be required to conform to the standards outlined.

This issue is closely related to the soil environment and the interaction between the two. Differing soil properties influences the transmission or storage of potentially polluting elements and protecting soil from pollution will ultimately protect water quality.

There is a rich and varied landscape within the county, giving it a sense of place and shared heritage. The Landscape Character Assessment (Phase 1) dealt with the upland areas and over the lifetime of the Plan it is envisaged that Phase 2 will be undertaken on the remainder of the

County. The Plan has however identified a number of high amenity areas which will be protected. Development which may compromise the aesthetic quality of the area will not normally be permitted, thus ensuring the long term protection of this valuable resource.

Conclusion

The Council recognises that a planned approach to the orderly development of the county is required. Development is both necessary and desirable to achieve economic growth and the purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment is to ensure that the guiding principals for development do not impact in an adverse manner on the environmental quality of the County.

The assessment process which is carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the plan, allows for an early indication of the potential environmental effects. The changes or alterations to the plan are made throughout the course of its preparation. Through this process of assessment and re-assessment, it was identified that particular objectives or policies could potentially have a negative environmental impact on any of the individual environmental themes or indeed on a number of them simultaneously. The benefit therefore of preparing the two together, the Plan and the Environment Report ensures that these issues are highlighted at an early stage in the process. This allows the potential negative aspects of the plan to be addressed early on and effectively eliminated from the draft and final Plan.

In summary, each of the plans policies and objectives were found to be acceptable in terms of protecting the environmental quality within the county. Monitoring of the plan throughout its lifetime will ensure that any potential adverse environmental impacts, unforeseen at this stage will be identified early so as to prevent any deterioration of the environment. This plan, as currently presented, balances economic growth with environmental protection and conservation and encompasses fully the ethos of sustainability.