

## Chapter Two - Methodology

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### Introduction

The methodology used to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Draft South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015 reflects the requirements of the SEA Directive and other SEA documentation such as *“Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities”* published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and *“Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report”* published by the EPA in 2003. Moreover, the Directive 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. This section of the report outlines the steps taken in the development of the assessment in accordance with the Directive and the aforementioned regulations.

### Screening

The screening process is the first stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Screening assesses the need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Under Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Guidelines, a Strategic Environmental Assessment is mandatory for all ‘*city and county development plans*’.

### Scoping and Consultation

A scoping was prepared to establish the scope and extent of the Environmental Report and to facilitate consultation with the designated statutory consultees. Scoping enables a more focused SEA, dealing with the important environmental issues or problems.

The scoping report was completed in November 2007 and circulated to the statutory consultees, namely;

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

Other non-statutory consultees were provided with the scoping report and asked to comment. These include the neighbouring local authority areas of Limerick, Cork, North Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford. No issues of concern were raised by either set of consultees.

The local authority received over 200 submissions and observations during the public consultation period on the Development Plan which ran from the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2007 to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2007. Many of the submissions had an environmental focus and raised issues such as:

- Need for coordinated village development of appropriate scale, density and design;
- Need for services to be delivered in tandem with residential development;
- Need to deliver new high quality recreational and amenity facilities;
- Need for improvements to the built and natural environment in some settlements and to continue to protect the environmental assets of the county;
- Need for improvements to our strategic route corridors, both road and rail; and

These issues were fully considered in the preparation of the Draft County Development Plan and have contributed to the formulation of the policies and objectives contained within.

### **Environmental Issues raised during the Scoping Process**

The following is a brief overview of the environmental issues highlighted during the scoping process requiring particular focus in the Environmental Report.

#### *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 imperative that due regard is given to these areas within the Draft County Development Plan.

#### *Landscape and Visual Amenity*

The current County Development Plan (2003-2009) identifies 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 that 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.

#### *Water quality*

The surface and ground water quality of the county has witnessed considerable pressure over the course of the current County Development Plan (2003-2009) period as a consequence of the substantial rise in the quantity of development being experienced across the County. Consequently the Plan must firstly consider this issue and secondly provide clear policy to ensure that development can be facilitated through the new Draft County Development Plan while also ensuring that there are suitable checks in place to ensure that the water quality of the County improves.

There is also a need to assess the risk to flooding potential within the county in any future policies that may be introduced as a result of the Draft County Development Plan. The impact of the EPA licensing of Local Authority wastewater plants and the provisions of the Water Framework Directive will also be significant considerations.

### **Baseline Data**

The baseline data establishes the current state of the environment and facilitates the identification, evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the effects of the plan. Thus, this information creates a platform whereby existing problems relevant to the Draft County Development Plan (CDP) can be quantified (where possible) or qualified thereby ensuring that the implementation of the Draft County Development Plan does not exacerbate these problems.

Baseline data has been collected from existing sources for each of the various environmental topics described in the SEA Directive i.e. biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage and landscape. No additional studies, as part of the SEA process, have been undertaken.







The Directive requires that information be focused upon relevant aspects of the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be significantly affected by the plan and the likely change, both in positive and negative terms where applicable.

## Environmental Assessment of the Draft South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009 - 2015

The principal component of the SEA involves a broad environmental assessment of the objectives and policies of the CDP. The authors have employed a methodology that utilizes the concept of matrices both to assess the environmental impact and to present the conclusions. It is a process which has helped to refine and refocus the objectives and policies of the Draft County Development Plan and demonstrates the advantage of preparing the Draft County Development Plan in conjunction with the SEA Environmental Report.

Key to assessing the policies and objectives of the plan is defining a specific set of Strategic Environmental Objectives for each of the environmental topics as advised in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 436, and these are discussed in Chapter 5.

The potential effects within the assessment exercise were categorized, as per the guidelines, into the following broad environmental impacts:

-  Positive impact
-  Indirectly positive impact
-  Neutral impact
-  Negative impact
-  Indirectly negative impact
-  Uncertain nature of impact.

This symbology is consistent throughout the report, however the discussions on the various policies and objectives, contained in Chapter 7 expands on the above to include, where necessary, an assessment of impact in terms of quality, significance, duration and type.

### Further Consultations

The SEA Regulations provide for extensive public consultation with respect to the Environmental Report and its associated plan or programme. This consultation period provides individuals and organizations with an opportunity to participate in the process.

The draft plan and environmental report will be put on public display to allow the general public to make submissions. The submissions will be reviewed and where necessary changes or amendments will be made to the plan and consequently to the environmental report, if required.

### Consideration of Alternatives

The SEA Directive (Article 5) recommends that alternatives to the plan are included for assessment. Alternatives need to be '*realistic and capable of implementation*' and should represent a range of different approaches within the statutory and operational requirements of the particular plan'. In the case of the Draft County Development Plan, the strategic options are limited and therefore the alternatives are confined to the following broad planning philosophies:

- Non-Planned (Worst Case);
- Guidance Only –developer led; and
- Planned – Co-ordinated and managed - sustainable.

These are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, are assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives and are discussed in terms of potential outcomes and consequences.

## Technical Difficulties Encountered

Based on the level of information available, it can be reasonably concluded that no technical difficulties were encountered in preparing this environmental report.

## Authors

This report has been written and compiled by Brady Shipman Martin, Planning and Environmental Consultants. The authors wish to thank the staff of South Tipperary County Council for their input to the report. The staff members involved from Brady Shipman Martin are;

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