

Chapter Six – Alternatives

Introduction

The issue of alternatives is necessary in assessing the overall philosophy of the Draft County Development Plan. In accordance with the guidelines the alternatives put forward in this section are realistic and capable of implementation.

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 recognize that the population of the county is likely to increased 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 have 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 serviced 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 lackluster 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 Draft 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.