



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)

PROPOSED VARIATION 5
TO THE
WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016

ASHFORD TOWN PLAN

SEA SCREENING

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY BUILDINGS
WICKLOW

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SEA SCREENING REPORT
PROPOSED VARIATION 5 TO THE WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-2016
ASHFORD TOWN PLAN

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**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT)
REGULATIONS 2004 (AS AMENDED)**

REPORT PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 13K OF THE SEA REGULATIONS 2004 –

Determination of need for environmental assessment of a variation of a development plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 13K of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), where a Planning Authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under Section 13 of the Planning Act, it shall, before giving notice under Section 13 (2) of the Planning Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations.

Where the Planning Authority, following this consideration, determines that the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, the proposed variation shall be accompanied by an Environmental Report which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the proposed variation.

However, where the Planning Authority determines that the proposed variation would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, the Planning Authority shall give notice of this determination to the environmental authorities and shall allow the environmental authorities 3 weeks within which to make a submission or observation in relation to whether or not, in their opinion, the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Following receipt of any submission or observation, the Planning Authority shall determine whether or not the proposed variation of the development plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A and any submission or observation received from the environmental authorities.

As soon as practicable after making a determination the Planning Authority shall (a) make a copy of its decision, including, as appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection at the offices of the planning authority during office hours, and (b) notify its decision to any environmental authorities.

It should be noted that the process of making a local development plan (or 'town plan') through the variation process (i.e. under Section 13 of the Planning Act), rather than through the 'Local Area Plan' process under Section 20 of the Act, does not fundamentally alter the matter in which Strategic Environmental Assessment is approached – in accordance with Article 14 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), Strategic Environmental Assessment is not mandatory for Local Area Plans for settlements under 5,000 persons in target population and under 50 square kilometres in area (which is the case in this plan) but requires Local Area Plans for towns under these thresholds to be screened in exactly the same manner as a variation to the County Development Plan carried out under Section 13 of the Act.

2. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED VARIATION

The proposed variation entails the adoption into the current County Development Plan of a new development plan for the settlement of Ashford (Ashford town plan).

This town plan will set out a land-use framework for up to a maximum of 8 years for the town including land use zoning, development policies and specific objectives. The plan will make provision for the growth of the town to a population of 3,000 in 2022 from 2011 census population of 1,484, in accordance with the Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016.

A key aim of the town plan is to set out the vision and overall strategy for the future development of the settlement and from this vision, all policies and objectives can be developed and implemented with the overall aim of achieving this vision.

The vision for Ashford is:

- To ensure a high quality living environment for existing and future residents
- To provide a framework for the growth of the town, in order to provide housing for current and future generations, to revitalise the economy of the town and to allow improvements of social and community facilities
- Sustain a revitalised town centre with commercial, residential and community developments forming a new streetscape along the R772
- Create increased connectivity between a revitalised town core and the existing and proposed residential zonings within the plan area
- Facilitate and encourage the integration of the River Vartry as a key feature in the redevelopment of the town centre, maximising its potential as a local amenity
- Promote and foster economic development and linkages to surrounding larger settlements within and outside the County
- Develop the tourism potential of the area as a visitor/ tourist destination in itself and in its role as a 'gateway' linking the east and southeast of the County and the Wicklow Mountains
- Protect the built and natural heritage of the area

In recognition of the historical pattern of development, the profile of the settlement, the demands of higher order strategies and the vision for the town set out above, the development strategy is as follows:

- To reinforce and improve the visual appearance of the central area of the town and encourage development that will enhance the town's vitality and vibrancy
- To identify key sites suitable for development in the town centre and set out design criteria capable of meeting the overall vision for the town core area
- To plan for and encourage the provision of high quality housing, concentrated principally around Ashford town centre and lands within 500m of the town centre
- To improve linkages between Ashford Town Centre and the Nun's Cross area and in particular, to designate lands for new housing in this area, subject to substantial improvement to access routes, both vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists
- To plan for and encourage the development of new employment opportunities, in the form of both new mixed use developments in the town centre and office / light industrial / warehousing development on greenfield lands to the north of the town centre
- To facilitate and support further development of the existing film studios
- To identify and address deficits in social, community and recreational services; to require developers to provide such facilities in tandem with new housing development and to require the payment of development levies for the provision of such facilities by the local authority
- To ensure that only appropriate land uses are provided on lands identified as being at risk of flooding.
- To create functional public spaces and pedestrian routes linked to new development that maximise the natural features of the area

- To ensure the protection and enhancement of natural habitats, cultural heritage, ecological resources and biodiversity.

The town plan area encompasses c. 228ha and 1,484 people live in the plan area¹. The overall size of the plan in the context of the county of Wicklow is considered to be moderate, with the town being designated as a Level 5 'Small Growth Town' in the County settlement hierarchy. The Ashford plan will make provision for an increase in town population in accordance with the population projections set out in the County settlement hierarchy of the Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016, which has set population growth target of 3,000 in 2022.

The draft town plan will designate lands for new residential and employment development, community use, amenity and open space.

Overall, the proposed draft town plan proposes to designate:

- c. 5.5ha as town centre /neighbourhood centre uses
- c. 66ha as existing residential development
- c. 41ha as new residential development
- c. 0.88ha as existing employment use
- c. 13ha as new employment development
- c. 10ha as existing Film Industry
- c. 6.7ha as open space
- c. 8.4ha as active Open Space
- c. 44ha as existing private open space
- c. 7.2ha for community and educational use

The plan also includes a number of objectives for specific works / projects and public infrastructure including the provision of new water infrastructure, roads, footpath and cycleways throughout the settlement.

3. ASSESSMENT IN TERMS OF SCHEDULE 2A

<p>1.0 Characteristics of the plan or programme, having regard, in particular to:</p>
<p>1.1 The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</p> <p>The purpose of the proposed Ashford town plan is to provide a framework to deliver development projects within the town including location, nature, and size and operating conditions and allocating the necessary resources. It is a land use plan within the terms of the Planning Act 2000 (as amended) which will seek to provide guidance using policies and objectives for the development of social, physical and environmental infrastructure in a sustainable manner for Ashford.</p>
<p>1.2 The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes, including those in a hierarchy</p> <p>The proposed Ashford town plan would not significantly influence any other plans or programmes, as it operates on a principle of subsidiarity to the County Development Plan</p>
<p>1.3 The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</p> <p>The proposed Ashford town plan is to be adopted as a variation to the current Wicklow County Development Plan. The plan is prepared under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and therefore must confine itself to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. All policies and objectives must be informed</p>

¹ Based on Census 2011 and GeoDirectory

by the principles of sustainable development.

The preparation of the plan is also guided by the overall objectives and goals of the Wicklow County Development Plan which seek:

- To implement the overarching guidance offered by the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, the National Development Plan 2007-2013, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, and manage the spatial organisation of the county in an efficient sustainable manner.
- To facilitate and encourage the growth of employment, enterprise and economic activity in the County, across all economic sectors and in all areas
- To integrate land use planning with transportation planning, with the dual aim of reducing the distance that people need to travel to work, shops, schools and places of recreation and social interaction, and facilitating the delivery of improved public transport.
- To enhance existing housing areas and to provide for high quality new housing, at appropriate locations and to ensure the development of a range of house types, sizes and tenures in order to meet the differing needs of all in society and to promote balanced communities.
- To maintain and enhance the viability and vibrancy of settlements, to ensure that towns and villages remain at the heart of the community and provide a wide range of retail, employment, social, recreational and infrastructural facilities.
- To protect and enhance the County's rural assets and recognise the housing, employment, social and recreational needs of those in rural areas.
- To protect and improve the County's transport, water, waste, energy and communications infrastructure, whilst having regard to our responsibilities to respect areas protected for their important flora, fauna or other natural resources.
- To promote and facilitate the development of sustainable communities through land use planning, by providing for land uses capable of accommodating, community, leisure, recreational and cultural facilities, accessible to and meeting the needs of all individuals and local community groups, in tandem with the delivery of residential and physical infrastructure in order to create a quality built environment in which to live.
- To protect and enhance the diversity of the County's natural and built heritage.
- To address climate change challenge, as a plan dynamic, throughout the County plan, directly in the areas of flooding and renewable energy, and indirectly by integrating climate change and sustainable development into statements of plan policy, strategies and objectives.

1.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme

The proposed town plan has been evaluated against the following environmental factors, as per the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan:

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

Through the development of agricultural lands, the proposed town plan may give rise to impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna. However, through the implementation of the objectives of the proposed town plan and the objectives of the adopted County Development Plan, which will apply to all development within the plan area (this plan being subsidiary to the County Development Plan) significant, adverse impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna are not considered likely.

There are no Natura 2000 or NHA sites within the plan area, with the closest designated site being the Murrough wetlands SAC/SPA which is located c. 2.3km to the east of the plan boundary and outside of the catchment area for treated wastewater flows emanating from the town.

The Vartry River passing through the centre of the town is a Salmonid River which is protected under the European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) regulations, S.I. No 84 of 1988. The objective of this designation type is the maintenance of water quality for salmon and trout freshwater species (see assessment of water quality set out to follow).

Population and human health

The proposed town plan and any development that arises there from, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on population and human health that were not already identified and addressed

in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan, of which this plan forms part.

The SEA of the CDP concluded that, subject to the integration of mitigation measures², the potential adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing the County Development Plan population targets were likely to be avoided, reduced or offset. As per that evaluation, it is considered that by providing a town plan that would allow the delivery of the County Development Plan population target for Ashford, would have no significant adverse effect, subject to the mitigation policies as included in the CDP.

The environmental impact of the plan results from the provision of land use designations and objectives which aim to accommodate future growth targets. These objectives provide for the planning and management of land for a variety of uses including residential, retail, employment, community and recreational uses and incorporate conservation objectives to protect the integrity of the environment and guard it from significant adverse effects. Subject to adequate inclusion of appropriate policies and objectives which will result in the optimum location, layout and design of any new development resulting from this plan, it is considered that no significant environmental issues can be identified in relation to the target populations and associated designation of lands for particular uses.

Soil

The proposed town plan and any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on soil that were not already identified and addressed through appropriate mitigation measures in the SEA for the County Development Plan.

Water

The proposed town plan and any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on surface or ground waters or on the risk of flooding that were not already identified and addressed in the SEA for the County Development Plan.

In particular:

- Development that may occur on foot of this plan will be served by the Knockrobin wastewater treatment plant which serves Ashford and Wicklow/Rathnew. This waste water treatment system has a capacity of 34,000 p.e. (population equivalent). The plant therefore has adequate capacity to meet the needs of the 2022 projected plan area population and its associated commercial and community development, and therefore the potential of risk of pollution to surface or ground waters from wastewater is considered low.
- Surface water in the plan area generally drains towards the River Vartry. Water quality in the Vartry currently has a moderate ecological status designation from the EPA however with the introduction of the relatively new Knockrobin wastewater treatment plant it is envisaged that with the removal of discharge points from Ashford and Rathnew waste water treatment plants that the updated status of this surface water body will be upgraded to 'Good Ecological' status. Furthermore new development that may occur on foot of this plan will be subject to the policies and objectives of this plan and the CDP which will ensure that surface waters are separated, attenuated and appropriately treated before discharge to an approved surface water system.
- Other risks to surface water that might arise on foot of this plan include contamination resulting from inappropriate construction management, accidental spillages etc. However, through the implementation of the objectives, mitigation measures and development standards set out in the CDP, such risks are eliminated / reduced to the point where no residual impacts are likely to remain
- Ashford is served by the Wicklow Water Supply Scheme from Cronroe Reservoir. The water at Cronroe is a combination of water from the Dublin Regional Scheme at Vartry Reservoir and water that is abstracted and treated at the Cronroe Water Treatment plant. Upon completion of a new pipeline from the Vartry supply to the Cronroe Reservoir (commenced), the scheme, and Ashford Town, will have sufficient water supply to meet the needs of projected population growth.
- The ground water protection scheme for Wicklow identifies that ground water vulnerability in the town of Ashford (as defined by the boundaries of this plan) range from low to extreme, the areas of extreme vulnerability are mostly located to the south west of the River Vartry at Ballymacahara and

² List of objectives that comprise the mitigation measures are included in Appendix I attached.

Ballinalea. Through the implementation of the objectives, mitigation measures and development control standards of the CDP, risks to ground water from new development are eliminated / reduced to the point where no residual impacts are likely to remain

- With respect to flood risk, a strategic flood risk assessment has been carried out for the proposed plan which identifies and addresses any possible impacts from flooding.

Air and climatic factors

The proposed town plan and in particular, any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on air and climatic factors that were not already identified and addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan.

Material assets

The proposed town plan and any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on material assets that were not already identified and addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan.

Cultural heritage

The proposed town plan and any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on cultural heritage that were not already identified and addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan.

- There are a number of protected structures and national monuments located within, bordering and adjacent to the plan boundary. It is not considered likely that the integrity of these structures will be affected by the plan, subject to the implementation of the objectives, mitigation measures and development standards set out in this plan and the County Development Plan.

Landscape

The proposed town plan and in particular, any development that arises therefrom, would not result in any additional significant, adverse impacts on landscape that were not already identified and addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan. Ashford town is designated an 'urban area' in terms of the Landscape Characterisation of the County as set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan. It is not proposed in the draft plan to zone additional lands (from that previously zoned under the 2008 Local Area Plan) for development outside of this 'urban' zone in the landscape zone designated a 'corridor area'. This zone is identified as being of low vulnerability.

1.5 The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).

Such EU plans, programmes and legislation are generally considered under the Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016 and will not be specifically addressed in this town plan. The Ashford town plan will therefore be guided and informed by waste management, water protection policies and objectives etc set out within the County Development Plan 2010-2016.

2.0 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

2.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

In the case of the proposed Ashford town plan, environmental effects that may arise will generally result from the land use designation and development of land. The proposed plan includes a number of land use designations and related objectives as set out in the general introduction to Level 5 and Level 6 plans (see table 4).

This plan forms part of the current Wicklow County Development Plan 2010-2016 and as such where policies are not directly covered by this plan, the objectives and policies of the CDP apply. All development proposals shall comply with the qualitative and quantitative development objectives of the CDP. The environmental effect of these objectives have been considered in the Environmental Report of the Wicklow CDP 2010-2016 SEA and, subject to the integration of the mitigation objectives (set out in Appendix I attached) of the CDP, it was concluded that any potential adverse environmental effects resulting from implementing the plan are likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.

Development Objective/Land uses	Summary of Policies/Objectives Proposed	Effect on Environment
Extension of settlement boundary	It is not proposed that any additional lands to those already zoned within the 2008 Ashford Local Area will be required in order to meet the project population up to 2022. The plan does however propose that the existing Film Studio lands measuring c.10ha be zoned in recognition of existing uses.	No significant effect, subject to adherence to mitigation objectives included in the plan namely BD1 – BD3 of Section 8. The effect resulting from any future land use type that may be developed on these lands is considered below.
Residential	The population targets require an additional 858 units up to 2022. Residential units are promoted within the residential and town centre zonings of the plan except where otherwise specified.	The environmental effect of growth targets is considered in the Environmental Report of the Wicklow CDP 2010-2016 SEA. This Assessment concluded that, subject to the integration of mitigation measures ³ included in the CDP, the potential adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing the targets is likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.
Employment	The plan has proposed that 14ha of land be reserved for employment purposes. The plan has also made provision of c.10ha to be zoned in recognition of existing Film related uses on the lands at Inchinappa South.	No significant effect on the environment, subject to compliance with development management policies as set out in the CDP.
Retail	Promote a range of retail uses within the town centre lands including a variety of small scale outlets with potential for a mini-supermarket.	No significant effect on the environment, subject to compliance with development management policies as set out in the CDP.
Community	To facilitate the development of community facilities on designated lands, facilitating the expansion of the existing schools as required and meeting the future community needs of the projected population.	Positive and durable, subject to compliance with development management policies as set out in the CDP.
Recreation	Preserve and improve public and private open space and recreation provision on lands designated as Open Space and Active Open Space.	Positive and durable

Infrastructure	Ensure that a reliable and effective wastewater, water, drainage, energy, waste management and communications infrastructure is put in place to service the existing and future development needs of the settlement, in a manner that protects the quality of the environment, and to allow for the improvement of public services and public utility installations.	Positive and durable – improve human health and safety, reduce risk of accidents and accidental emission of pollutants, reduce demand for vehicular travel thereby reducing CO ₂ emissions.
Water Quality	<p>The plan sets out targets for increasing the population of Ashford. The settlement is divided by the Vartry River with a number of minor tributaries within and adjoining the plan area.</p> <p>The EPA indicate that the monitoring points along the River Vartry provide a good water quality status with the monitoring point at Mount Usher providing a moderate status.</p> <p>The ecological status of the Vartry surface water body provided by the EPA indicate that this river system currently has a moderate ecological status designation however with the introduction of the relatively new Knockrobin wastewater treatment and the removal of discharges points from Ashford and Rathnew waste water treatment plants it is envisaged that this water body will be upgraded to 'Good Ecological' status.</p> <p>The tributary of the Vartry situated to the north of the plan area currently has a 'Good' ecological status.</p> <p>The plan includes objectives to ensure all waste water generated is collected and discharged after treatment in a safe and sustainable manner, strictly in accordance with the standards and requirements set out in EU and national legislation and guidance documents including the provisions of the Eastern River Basin Management Plan and the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>While the existing treatment plant has adequate capacity to meet the demands of the future population of Ashford in the event that infrastructure issues occur objective WW2⁴ of the CDP ensures that no development will be undertaken if there is inadequate capacity within a WWTP.</p> <p>WT1⁵ of the CDP aims to implement the EU Water Framework Directive and to restrict development likely to lead to deterioration in water quality.</p>	<p>Positive and durable - the policies and objectives of the proposed town plan and CDP will ensure that water and waste water infrastructure is adequate to meet future demand.</p> <p>These policies and objectives will have a positive contribution in the achievement of a 'Good' ecological status for Ashford and the River Vartry catchment by 2027.</p>
Built & Natural Heritage	Continued protection of all identified buildings, features and sites of heritage value.	Positive and durable effect
Flood Risk	The Vartry River traverses the plan area from the north west at Ballinahinch to the south east at Mount Usher. It is an overall objective of the plan to appropriately control development in flood prone areas.	As part of the plan preparation process, a flood risk assessment has been carried out. It is considered that the plan will have a neutral effect, subject to objectives which are included to mitigate risks from flooding.
Regeneration	Encourage the redevelopment / regeneration of vacant, derelict underutilised sites, and to particularly promote the development of town centre sites and backlands as identified by Opportunity Sites 1 and 2 and 3.	Positive and durable effect

2.2 The cumulative nature of the effects

The cumulative effects of the implementation of the above development objectives / land uses has been considered and it is concluded that the preparation of the proposed Ashford Town Plan will overall have a positive environmental effect, as it will enable the development of the Town to proceed in an orderly and sustainable manner, whereby potential adverse environmental effects can be avoided, reduced or offset through the introduction of mitigation measures.

2.3 The transboundary nature of the effects

Wicklow County Council is preparing this plan. The plan has no national, regional or inter-county transboundary effects.

2.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

No significant adverse effects on human health have been identified.

Any future development arising on foot of the proposed town plan will require to conform to the development standards set out in the Wicklow County Development Plan.

There are no designated SEVESO sites within the plan area.

2.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

No significant adverse effects have been identified.

With respect to positive effects, the proposed town plan will affect an area of c. 228ha and a planned future population of 3,000 persons.

2.6 The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,

There are a number of areas in County Wicklow that are considered to have special natural characteristics, and these are designated Natura 2000 and / or NHA sites. A number of these sites are considered highly valuable and vulnerable to effects from development. No significant adverse effects on these sites as a result of the proposed plan have been identified (with respect to Natura 2000 sites, the impacts of the proposed plan on such sites has been further examined in a separate Appropriate Assessment screening exercise).

There are a number of landscapes in County Wicklow that are considered to have special natural characteristics, and are considered highly valuable and vulnerable to effects from development. No significant adverse effects on these areas have been identified.

With respect to cultural heritage, no significant, unmitigatable adverse effects on cultural heritage are likely to arise from the proposed town plan through the implementation of the development control policies and objectives of the proposed plan, the Wicklow County Development Plan and the mitigations measures set out in the plan SEA.

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

None identified

c) intensive land-use,

The proposed town plan would not result in more intensive land use and any impacts associated with same that were not already identified and addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the County Development Plan.

2.7 The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

There are a number of areas or landscapes in Wicklow which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status. No significant adverse effects on these sites resulting from the proposed town plan have been identified.

All developments that arise on foot of the proposed town plan will be bound by the development control policies and objectives of the Wicklow County Development Plan and the mitigations measures set out in the plan Strategic Environmental Assessment concerning to protection and enhancement of such areas.

4. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION OF PLANNING AUTHORITY FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT IN TERMS OF SCHEDULE 2A

It is considered that the proposed town plan is not likely to have new significant adverse effects on the environment that have not already been detailed and addressed in the original Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan and therefore Strategic Environmental Assessment is not warranted for the proposed variation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH STATUTORY SEA ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES

The preliminary conclusion of Planning Authority following assessment in terms of SCHEDULE 2A was issued to all of the statutory Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Authorities, namely:

- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Any adjoining Planning Authority whose area is continuous to the area of the Planning Authority which prepared the proposed variation

All consultees were afforded not less than 3 weeks to respond, as provided in Section 13K (3)(iii) of the SEA Regulations. Responses were received from:

- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The Geological Survey of Ireland (through the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)

The Environmental Protection Agency

Issues raised:

1. The position with respect to the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment of the variation is noted
2. Consideration should be given to clarifying whether the proposed additional residentially zone lands are to be developed on a phased basis. Lands proposed for phased development with the plan area should be highlighted accordingly on the relevant land use maps. It should also be ensured that the Core Strategy approach to sustainable development, as advocated by the RPGs, is incorporated into the proposed variation.
3. In the context of protecting biodiversity, there would be merits in including commitment to protect the integrity of existing green infrastructure (hedgerows, riparian corridors etc) where possible
4. It is matter for Wicklow County Council to determine whether or not any future variations would be likely to have significant affects of the environment
5. In proposing the variation, and in implementing the variation, adequate and appropriate infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorized during the lifetime if the particular variation.

6. Attention is drawn to updated SEA Regulations and various SEA related circulars which should be referred and integrated into the plan and SEA process

Response:

1. Noted
2. It will be clearly set out in the plan that the residential zoning provisions are drawn up on the basis of meeting the housing needs of the 2022 target population, but that the development management system will appropriately control and phase development to ensure that 2016 targets are not breached before this date. The plan will also provide for phased role out of major development areas, namely the 'action areas' and 'Specific Local Objective' areas and phasing requirements will be clearly set out. The plan will be shown to be clearly nested into the Core Strategy and RPGs and will be fully compliant with the principles set out in these higher order strategies.
3. As this plan forms part of the CDP, all existing policies and objectives with respect to 'green infrastructure' will apply in this plan, area. In particular, the provisions of Chapter 17 of the CDP will directly apply, which deals with biodiversity, woodlands, trees and hedgerows, riparian areas and green infrastructure, amongst other things.
4. Noted
5. Agreed - the provisions of the CDP which will apply directly in this plan area, clearly require necessary services to be in place to service development
6. Noted

Assessment:

No specific issues raised with respect to Strategic Environmental Assessment determination of the proposed variation. Therefore no changes to the original conclusions come about on foot of this submission.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)

Issues raised:

1. Receipt of report is acknowledged
2. Information provided on data and service provided by the GSI as well as consultation required on geological issues

Assessment:

No specific issues raised with respect to Strategic Environmental Assessment determination of the proposed variation. Therefore no changes to the original conclusions come about on foot of this submission.

6. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Having assessed the proposed town plan / variation in accordance with Schedule 2A and having consulted with the statutory SEA Environmental Authorities, it is considered that the proposed town plan is not likely to have new significant adverse effects on the environment that have not already been detailed and addressed in the original Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted County Development Plan and therefore Strategic Environmental Assessment is not warranted for the proposed variation.