

Appendix 5. Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan

I – INTRODUCTION

Section 10(5)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that planning authorities deal with the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan. This requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment process (SEA) which will be ongoing over the life of the Plan.

The SEA process is similar to that of an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) in that it identifies potential adverse effects on the environment and attempts to minimise or mitigate these effects through specified actions. However, where EIA relates to the implementation of a specific project, SEA relates to the implementation of an entire Plan.

SEA is a new process which provides a useful simple tool to checklist that:

- the widest range of environmental considerations are dealt with to its fullest potential in the Plan
- that proposed actions may be influenced in order to minimise adverse environmental impacts

The SEA also highlights the environmental benefits of the implementation of a particular plan.

2 – THE SEA PROCESS FOR THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The process involves:

1. Setting the strategic environmental aims
2. Appraising the main planning goals and strategic development principles against these environmental aims

2.1 – ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS

Environmental Aims need to be established in order to appraise the main planning goals and strategic development principles:

- P Protection of the Landscape
- G Protection and conservation of architectural and cultural heritage and material assets
- K The encouragement of sustainable transport
- î Encourage social inclusion and access for all
- 4 Minimisation of waste
- L Encourage Energy Efficiency
- à Conserve and enhance biodiversity and natural heritage

2.2 – APPRAISING THE MAIN PLANNING GOALS AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AGAINST THESE ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS

Vision and Overall Strategy for County Wicklow

To support the principles of sustainability as manifested in Agenda 21 in the following ways:

1. To provide for sustainable growth and regulate pressures from both urban and rural development, in particular sporadic development in rural areas, by providing a sustainable settlement and growth strategy.
2. To develop a high quality, sustainable and integrated transportation system embracing the road and rail transport sectors with an increased emphasis on public transport to achieve a more balanced and sustainable transport system.
3. To develop social, cultural and community facilities in appropriate locations and scale that are accessible to all members of the community, with the long term effect of sustaining and enriching the quality of life of people in Wicklow.
4. To encourage and facilitate the provision of infrastructure services to meet the demand for development and future population needs in a sustainable manner.
5. To strengthen and enhance the County's image, both rural and urban, by encouraging and facilitating the principles of good design and high quality development.
6. To promote the sustainable development of the built and natural environment in County Wicklow and to ensure that new development is integrated sympathetically into the landscape in a manner that will ensure that the landscape can be handed on to future generations without being degraded.
7. To secure an economic and employment base in Wicklow that will attract high quality investment and provide a range of job opportunities thereby maximise social inclusion.
8. To assist in the implementation of objectives set out in Outlook that are appropriate to Land Use and Planning.

Population and settlement Strategy

To encourage housing, industry and other development to locate on suitably zoned lands or in existing towns and villages that have basic social, community and physical infrastructure. This Plan seeks to control growth and regulate pressures from both urban and rural development by providing a settlement strategy, which is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

Housing strategy

To ensure that, insofar as the resources and the remit of Wicklow County Council permit, suitable accommodation is available for each household within the County, in an appropriate location and at a price or rent that they can afford; and to promote the development of stable and sustainable communities through policies relating to the location, scale, character and tenure of dwellings built.

Design and Development

To encourage and facilitate the development of a range of high quality and good design development in both urban and rural areas. To promote the renewal and regeneration of urban areas with the use of good urban design to create consolidated urban areas that are attractive to live and work in.

Employment and Industry

To encourage and facilitate the expansion of existing industry and the creation of new industry without comprising high environmental standards or the principles of sustainable development, thereby creating an environment that is conducive to employment generation and attractive to potential employers.

Retailing

To support the future vitality and viability of the retail centres and to facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the retail industry.

Community

To promote the development of sustainable communities on the basis of a high quality of life where people can live and work and enjoy access to a range of community facilities suitable for all ages and needs.

Infrastructure (transport, roads, waste water treatment, water, energy etc..)

The location of County Wicklow within the Greater Dublin Area and its close proximity to Dublin and international links, has resulted in development pressure in particular within the north of the County. The Plan, therefore seeks to encourage and facilitate the provision of infrastructure services to meet the demand for development and future population increases in an environmentally sustainable manner.

To promote the use of sustainable and integrated modes of transport; to protect and enhance the built environment through the provision of a range of high quality water, drainage and waste management facilities; encourage the use of sustainable and efficient energy resources and to facilitate the provision of widespread telecommunications infrastructure.

Heritage and landscape

The Council will conserve, protect and enhance Wicklows' built and natural heritage and landscape where possible. The Council will facilitate the production and implementation of a County Heritage Plan in association with the Wicklow Heritage Forum, as a mechanism to achieve these aims.

Tourism and Recreation

To promote County Wicklow as a tourism destination and to support the development of the tourism and recreational product in an environmental and sustainable way that widens the spatial spread these activities within the county.

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Enterprise

To promote environmentally sustainable agricultural activity, a vibrant and healthy forestry sector and to encourage the development of rural-based enterprises established on the principles of sustainable development to contribute positively to a vibrant and dynamic rural economy and society.