

STATEMENT

on the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023

August 2017

1. Legislative requirements

This is the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Statement of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).

Article 13I of the SEA Regulations indicates that the SEA Statement must include information summarising:

- a. how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan;
- b. how
 - i. the environmental report,
 - ii. submissions and observations made to the planning authority in relation to the proposed Plan and environmental report,
 - iii. any trans-boundary consultations (this requirement is not relevant to the SEA of Sligo CDP)have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan;
- c. the reasons for choosing the Plan, as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives
- d. the measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan.

The following sections of this Statement address the requirements detailed above.

2. How environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan

As specified in the SEA Regulations, the Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 was required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) before adoption.

The findings of the SEA were expressed in an Environmental Report, which accompanied the Draft Plan.

The Environmental Report was updated by way of an Addendum, to take account of changes being made to the Draft Plan.

After the adoption of the Plan, the Addendum was incorporated into a final Environmental Report, which is available alongside the adopted Plan. At each stage of the process, the Elected Members took into account the findings of the Environmental Report and the Addendum, as appropriate.

The Environmental Report addresses in great detail the matters considered in the preparation of the Plan.

Environmental considerations were integrated into the Draft Plan before it was placed on public display. Environmental sensitivities were mapped in order to identify which areas of the County would be most sensitive to development and would suffer the most adverse effects if growth was to be accommodated in those areas unmitigated.

The sensitivities considered by the SEA included the following:

- designated ecological sites
- land cover, soil and sub-soil types;
- sites of geological interest, quarries and mineral locations, landslides;
- Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of surface, ground waters, transitional and coastal waters, WFD Register of Protected Areas;
- aquifer vulnerability and productivity;
- lakes, rivers and flood events, Land Commission benefitting lands;
- water supply and wastewater treatment capacity and demand;
- archaeological and architectural heritage;
- transportation and air quality;
- scenic routes, visually vulnerable areas and sensitive landscapes.

The preparation of the Plan and the SEA were fully integrated, due to the fact that both have been carried out by the same team – the Development Planning Unit of Sligo County Council.

Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) were undertaken in conjunction with the preparation the Plan.

Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora), under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).

The Plan has undergone AA screening during its preparation, in parallel with SEA. It was determined that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was not required. The findings of the Stage 1 AA are presented in the AA Screening Report.

The requirement for SFRA is set out in *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (DEHLG, 2009). All recommendations made by the SFRA in relation to flood risk management have been integrated into the Plan. The AA and the SFRA have informed both the Plan and the SEA.

3. Consultations

Pre-draft consultation

In 2015, upon commencement of pre-draft public consultation relating to the CDP review, an Issues Paper and a scoping notice were sent to the environmental authorities identified in the SEA Regulations, inviting submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report.

The notice was sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG), the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA), Leitrim County Council, Roscommon County Council, Mayo County Council and Donegal County Council.

As the Draft Plan was not likely to have significant effects on the environment in another EU Member State, trans-boundary consultations (as per Article 7 of the SEA Directive) were not undertaken.

Submissions were received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). These submissions influenced the scope of the assessment. Scoping ensured that the SEA focussed on the issues relevant to County Sligo.

Consultation on the Draft CDP

The Draft Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 and associated assessments were placed on public display from 21 September to 30 November 2016. The Second Chief Executive's Report, containing recommendations in relation to the 225 submissions received and some supplementary recommendations, was considered by the elected members of Sligo County Council at two meetings held on 27 March and 8 May 2017.

Submissions received from the EPA, DHPCLG, DAHRRGA resulted in recommendations to amend the Draft Plan, the Environmental Report and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Following consideration of the Second Chief Executive's Report, the members, by resolution, proposed a number of amendments to the Draft Plan. If adopted, most proposed amendments would be material alterations of the original draft.

Amendments were proposed to Volume 1 (text, policies, objectives) and Volume 2 (text, objectives, zoning) of the Draft Plan, Environmental Report, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, as well as to the Record of Protected Structures (for the County and for Sligo and Environs area) and to the associated *Proposed Additions and Deletions* document.

Consultation on Proposed Amendments

The Proposed Amendments to the Draft *Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023* (CDP) were on public display from 11 May 2017 to 21 June 2017.

The Proposed Amendments included 77 material changes to Volume 1 (main document) of the Draft CDP, 45 changes to Volume 2 (Mini-plans), 30 changes to the Record of Protected Structures, four changes to the Environmental Report and one change to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

The potential environmental effects of the proposed amendments were assessed and presented in an SEA Addendum and a Natura Impact Report, which were published along the proposed amendments during the consultation period.

During the public consultation period, Sligo County Council received 25 submissions and observations.

The submission received from the EPA resulted in recommendations to omit a particular amendment from the final plan, due to its potential for significant environmental impacts.

This recommendation was accepted by the Elected Members who adopted the Plan on 31 July 2017 without any amendments that would have had potential for significant environmental effects.

4. Consideration of alternative development scenarios

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the Plan) are identified, described and evaluated in relation to their likely significant effects on the environment.

These alternatives must be realistic, capable of implementation, and should represent a range of different approaches within statutory and operational requirements of the Plan.

Taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the CDP, three development scenarios were formulated.

The Demand-Led Growth (DLG), the Gateway-Focused Growth (GFG) and the Hierarchically-Structured Growth (HSG) scenarios provide alternative visions of how future growth might occur in County Sligo.

As the CDP is required by legislation to be reviewed and replaced by a new development plan every six years, a Do-Nothing scenario was not considered.

Having regard to the overall principles which underpin the concept of sustainable development, it was considered that Scenario HSG (Hierarchically-Structured Growth) sets out the preferred approach to the development of County Sligo over the period 2017 to 2023. This approach achieves a proper balance between economic, environmental and social considerations.

Section 7 of the Environmental Report provides a detailed evaluation of the three development scenarios with regard to their environmental and planning effects, and demonstrates that the HSG Scenario is the optimal development approach for County Sligo for the period 2017 to 2023.

5. Monitoring measures

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring enables the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action at an early stage.

Monitoring can also play an important role in assessing whether the Plan is achieving environmental objectives and targets.

Monitoring uses the indicators chosen in the SEA process. These indicators allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives used in the evaluation.

Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by the target(s) which were identified with regard to the relevant legislation.

Table 10.1 in the Environmental Report (reproduced below) shows the indicators and targets which have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan.

A preliminary evaluation report on the effects of implementing the County Development Plan will be prepared to coincide with the Chief Executive’s report to the Elected Members on the progress achieved in securing Plan objectives within two years of the making of the Plan (as required under Section 15 of the 2000 Planning Act).

Indicators and targets will be reviewed during the preparation of the preliminary monitoring evaluation report.

Table 10.1 of the ER – Selected indicators, targets and monitoring sources

Environmental component	Selected indicator(s)	Selected target(s)	Source
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	<p>B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity to macro-corridors and contiguous areas of habitat which are important on a County level without remediation as a result of implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>B3: Population of the County involved in land management.</p>	<p>B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under national and international legislation.</p> <p>B2: No significant macro-corridors and contiguous areas of habitat or parts thereof, which are important on a County level and which provide functional connectivity, to be lost without remediation as a result of implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>B3: Sustain the population of the County involved in land management.</p>	<p>National Parks and Wildlife Service’s report on the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive</p> <p>CORINE mapping resurvey, consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Development Management process in the Council’s Planning Section</p> <p>Central Statistics Office</p>
Population and human health	<p>P1: Area of brownfield lands developed over the Development Plan’s lifespan.</p> <p>HH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency.</p>	<p>P1: Reduced availability of brownfield land (subject to availability on the open market, the demand for such land and the ability for such lands to be sustainably re-used) at the end of the Development Plan lifespan.</p> <p>HH1: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan.</p>	<p>The Development Management process in the Council’s Planning Section</p> <p>EPA and HSE</p>

Environmental component	Selected indicator(s)	Selected target(s)	Source
Soil	S1: Number of instances of pollution and contamination of soil	S1: No significant instances of pollution and contamination	EPA
Water	W1i: Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 272 of 2009)	W1i: To achieve 'good' status in all bodies of surface waters by 2015 and to not knowingly allow deterioration in the status of any surface water	EPA
	W1ii: Mandatory and guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008)	W1ii: To achieve – as a minimum– mandatory values and, where possible, to achieve guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008)	EPA
	W2: Groundwater quality standards and threshold values under Directive 2006/118/EC	W2: Compliance with groundwater quality standards and threshold values under Directive 2006/118/EC	EPA
	W3: Number of developments granted permission on lands where a significant flood risk has been identified.	W3: Minimise developments granted permission on lands where a significant flood risk has been identified, in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.	The Development Management process in the Council's Planning Section
Material assets	M1: Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately served with wastewater treatment over the lifetime of the Plan.	M1: All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately served by wastewater treatment over the lifetime of the Plan	The Development Management process in the Council's Planning Section
	M2: Number of non-compliances with the 48 parameters identified in the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations (No. 2) 2007 which present a potential danger to human health, as a result of implementing the Plan.	M2: Absence of non-compliances with the 48 parameters identified in the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations (No. 2) 2007 which present a potential danger to human health, as a result of implementing the Plan.	EPA Remedial Action List and Sligo County Council's Environment Section

Environmental component	Selected indicator(s)	Selected target(s)	Source
Air and climatic factors	C1: Percentage of population within the County travelling to work or school by public transport or non-motorised means.	C1: An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work or school by public transport or non-motorised means	Central Statistics Office
Cultural heritage	<p>CH1: Percentage of protected entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, including Zones of Archaeological Potential, and their context within the surrounding landscape, where relevant)</p> <p>CH2i: Percentage of protected entries to the Record of Protected Structures (and/or their context within the surrounding landscape, where relevant)</p> <p>CH2ii: Number of additions to the Record of Protected Structures and the number of additional ACAs</p>	<p>CH1: Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, including Zones of Archaeological Potential, and their context within the surrounding landscape, where relevant</p> <p>CH2i: Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures (and/or their context within the surrounding landscape, where relevant)</p> <p>CH2ii: Add entries to the Record of Protected Structures and make additional ACAs, where appropriate</p>	<p>The Development Management and Enforcement processes in the Council's Planning Section</p> <p>The Development Management and Enforcement processes in the Council's Planning Section</p> <p>Sligo County Council's Planning and Heritage Section</p>
Landscape	L1: Number of complaints received from statutory consultees regarding avoidable impacts on the landscape resulting from development granted permission under the Plan.	L1: No avoidable impacts on the landscape resulting from development granted permission under the Plan.	The Development Management and Enforcement processes in the Council's Planning Section; complaints from statutory consultees