



**Enniscorthy Town and Environs
Development Plan
2014-2020**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Report**

April 2012



Wexford County Council
Planning & Development

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1.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.1 Introduction

In accordance with Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Enniscorthy Town Council and Wexford County Council intend to review the Enniscorthy Town and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 and prepare a new Development Plan for the area. The review of the existing Development Plan and the preparation of the new Development Plan will be strategic in nature for the purposes of developing objectives and policies to deliver an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Enniscorthy Town and Environs.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC requires an SEA to be carried out for all Plans which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The Directive was transposed into Irish Law through two sets of Regulations:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011); and
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004), amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) provide that SEA is mandatory for Development Plans for areas with a population of 10,000 or more. Where the population involved is less than 10,000, the Regulations require screening of the Plan to determine if SEA is required. This screening process must be carried out before notice of the review of the Plan is given in accordance with Section 11(1) of the

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The key to deciding if SEA will apply will be whether the plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The decision should not be determined by the size of an area alone. It will also be influenced by the nature and extent of the development likely to be proposed in the Plan, its location (e.g. close to or within an SAC, SPA or NHA) and its broad environmental effects.

The population of Enniscorthy Town and Environs was 9,538 persons in 2006 (Census, 2006). The population for the Town and Environs as calculated by the Census 2011 was not available at the time of preparing this report (i.e. prior to giving notice of review of the Plan). SEA screening was therefore carried out based on the population in 2006. The following report contains the results of the screening undertaken for the Enniscorthy Town and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 and the consequent determination as to whether SEA is required to be carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the new Development Plan.

1.2 Legal Framework

This report has been prepared in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42/EC and Article 13A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

1.3 Statutory Consultation

In accordance with Article 13A(4) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities is required where a determination as to whether the Plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment has not been made by the Planning Authority. In this instance a determination has been made by Enniscorthy Town Council and Wexford County Council and no consultation is therefore required at this time. Consultation with environmental authorities will be required for the next stages of the Development Plan and SEA processes (scoping and preparation of an Environmental Report).

2.0 Enniscorthy Town and Environs Development Plan 2014-2020

2.1 Description of Lands/Planning Context

Enniscorthy is the second largest town in County Wexford. It is situated on the banks of the River Slaney and is strategically located on the N11/ E01 Wexford to Dublin route and the Dublin-Rosslare Harbour railway line. The N30 also connects Enniscorthy with New Ross where it joins the N25/E30. Enniscorthy is identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022 (RPGs) and Variation No. 1 of the Wexford County Development Plan 2007-2013 as a larger town with a population in excess of 5,000 people. The RPGs suggest that these towns continue to be attractive locations for new residential development. However, it also cautions that care must be taken to ensure that the continued expansion of these towns is well managed to ensure that community, social and retail developments keep pace with recent residential development.

2.2 Purpose of Development Plan

The aim of the new Development Plan is to facilitate the planned, integrated and sustainable development of Enniscorthy Town and Environs so that growth can take place in a co-ordinated manner, while protecting and preserving the town's character, heritage and amenity and making a positive contribution and improvement to the population's quality of life.

The Development Plan will deal with such issues as:

- Economic Development
- Housing
- Community Facilities
- Recreation, Open Space and Public Rights of Way
- Infrastructure, Energy and Waste
- Transportation
- Environment

- Flood Risk Management
- Climate Change
- Heritage and Conservation

2.3 Local Considerations

There are some local considerations which require particular attention. These include the following:

- Slaney River Valley SAC
- Flooding
- Wastewater Treatment
- Water Abstraction
- Recorded monuments, Zones of Archaeological Potential and Protected Structures within the plan boundary
- Proposed Enniscorthy bypass

3.0 Assessment of the Environmental Effects of the Plan

In deciding whether the new Development Plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, it must be assessed against a set of criteria listed in Annex II of the SEA Directive/Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended). The assessment has been carried out and is summarised below.

3.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAN HAVING REGARD IN PARTICULAR TO:

3.1.1 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;

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a development framework for Enniscorthy Town and Environs. This framework will include the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes. These uses include residential, commercial, industrial, open space, amenity, community and education. The Plan will give a general indication on the preferred urban structure and layout for the area with reference to public open space, urban design, access roads and infrastructural requirements.

3.1.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy.

The hierarchy of plans on which this Development Plan is based is the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022 and the County Wexford Development Plan 2007-2013 which is currently under review. The Development Plan will be consistent with the policies and objectives of these higher tier plans. The Plan may provide that Action Area Plans are prepared for particular zones/sites within the plan area. Such plans will be required to be

consistent with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan.

3.1.3 The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires a Development Plan to include an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the Plan. The Plan must include a core strategy which shows that the development objectives in the Plan are consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines. The Plan must also include a separate statement which shows that the development objectives are consistent, as far as practicable, with the conservation and protection of the environment. Accordingly, all policies and objectives in the Development Plan will be informed by the principles of sustainable development.

3.1.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan.

Wastewater

The Enniscorthy Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is near capacity. The WWTP has a design capacity of 16,500 P.E. with current loading estimated at 16,000 P.E. A second treatment plant at Killagoley has a design capacity of 800 P.E. with current loading estimated at 1,350 P.E. An upgrade to the Enniscorthy WWTP is due to commence in 2013 and is expected to be completed in 2015. The new plant will have a design capacity of 30,000 P.E. and will provide secondary treatment with nitrogen and phosphorous removal which will have positive impacts for water quality and the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is expected that the Killagoley plant will be decommissioned once the upgrade is complete.

Drinking Water

Water is abstracted from the River Slaney at Clonhaston and pumped to the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) at Templeshannon. The WTP has a design capacity of 4,300m³/day and current volume abstracted at Clonhaston is circa 3,700m³/day. The Council has a licence to abstract 9,090m³/day. A supplementary supply of ca. 600m³/day is abstracted from a borehole at Edermine.

Traffic

Enniscorthy is located on the N11/ E01 Wexford to Dublin National Primary Route. The N30 also connects Enniscorthy with New Ross where it joins the N25/E30 Rosslare Harbour to Cork National Primary Route. Traffic congestion is a significant problem in the town at peak times of the day. The proposed M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy Scheme is at the planning stage. The preferred route has been selected. The scheme will bypass Ferns, Camolin and Enniscorthy and will incorporate a new bridge crossing of the River Slaney north of Enniscorthy. The proposed Enniscorthy bypass, if constructed, is likely to reduce traffic levels, associated emissions and noise levels with the town.

Designated Sites

Protection of Natura 2000 sites is a key requirement of the Habitats Directive. Natura 2000 sites are sites of biodiversity importance for rare and threatened habitats and species across the EU. They include SACs and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Appropriate Assessment Screening will be undertaken for the Development Plan, which will assess the possible significant effects on European sites, which include Natura 2000 sites, within the likely zone of impact of the Plan. The main sites affected are the Slaney River Valley SAC and Wexford Harbour and Slobbs Special Protection Area (SPA) which is adjacent to the south of the plan area.

Flooding

Parts of the plan area are within Flood Zones A and B as identified in an assessment carried out by JBA Consulting Engineers and Scientists LTD in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG & OPW, 2009) and also on the draft Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) integrated maps for the County received from the OPW in October 2011. Flood Zone A is defined as having a high risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. more than 1% probability or more than 1 in 100), while Flood Zone B is defined as having a moderate risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. 0.1% to 1% probability or between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000). The Planning Authorities are currently using both the JBA and OPW sets of maps for the consideration of land uses and assessment of planning applications. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be required to be carried out in conjunction with the preparation of the new Development Plan.

3.1.5 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).

The Development Plan and associated SEA Environmental Report will have regard to EU legislation on the environment where relevant. Waste management is currently guided by the Joint Waste Management Plan for the South-East Region 2006, which is compliant with EU Directives and legislation. Water protection is guided by the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan (2009-2015) which includes a programme of measures designed to achieve good water quality status in all waters in the South Eastern River Basin District by 2015, in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive. The policies and objectives of the Development Plan will be formulated having regard to both of these Plans.

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED, HAVING REGARD, IN PARTICULAR, TO:

3.2.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.

Water quality

The Water Framework Directive requires us to ensure that our waters achieve at least good status by 2015. The Slaney River is identified in the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan (2009-2015) as a Protected Area. These areas require special protection due to their sensitivity to pollution or their particular economic, social or environmental importance.

The section of the Slaney River which flows through Enniscorthy is identified as having 'good' status and the overall objective for this waterbody is to protect it from deterioration. An assessment carried out in 2008 identified this waterbody as being 'at risk' of not achieving good ecological or good chemical status/potential at least by 2015.¹

The policies and objectives of the Development Plan will be formulated having regard to the Water Framework Directive, the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan (2009-2015) and the associated Programme of Measures. The Councils will also seek to increase public awareness of water quality issues, reduce demand and where required, improve the quality of all waters. This will have positive long term effects on water quality in the area. The upgrade to the Enniscorthy WWTP will also have positive long term impacts for water quality.

Water supply

The Councils will seek to ensure the maintenance of a sufficient water supply that will meet the development needs of the plan area. The Councils will also seek to minimise wastage in the water supply network by

¹ <http://www.wfdireland.ie/maps.html>

implementing water conservation measures. This will have positive effects for water supply in the area for the duration of the Plan.

Storm water and surface water run-off

It is acknowledged that developments, if not properly managed, have the potential to give rise to storm water and surface water run-off issues that may result in flooding or increased overflows from combined sewers. The Councils will seek to ensure that all proposed drainage systems are consistent with Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) through appropriate policies and objectives in the Plan.

Part of the plan area is located within Flood Zones A and B. The Councils will have regard to The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG & OPW, 2009) and apply the justification test in the zoning of these lands. Applications for development in these areas, where relevant, will be required to be accompanied by an appropriate site specific flood risk assessment carried out in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines. Mitigation of flood risk will have positive long term effects.

Traffic generation

Traffic congestion is a significant problem in the town at peak times of the day and can cause negative impacts on air quality and human health. The Councils will have regard to traffic and transport infrastructure in the preparation of the Development Plan with a view to minimising impacts such as emissions and noise from traffic. The Development Plan will incorporate policies and objectives to improve link roads and to provide for safe pedestrian and cycling conditions throughout the plan area. The proposed Enniscorthy bypass, if constructed, is likely to reduce traffic levels, associated emissions and noise levels with the town.

Waste generation/collection

The Councils aim to address the issue of waste through the continued promotion of waste education, re-use and recycling. It is envisaged that this will have positive long term effects on the environment.

Loss of hedgerows and trees.

The loss of hedgerows and trees is likely to occur where new development takes place. While it is acknowledged that a certain proportion of existing habitats and species will be lost as a direct result of development, the Councils will aim to reduce the overall impact through appropriate mitigation measures and the policies and objectives in the Plan.

3.2.2 The cumulative nature of the effects.

Flood control policy will seek to ensure that all proposed drainage systems are consistent with Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). This will have positive cumulative effects in terms of reducing surface water run-off and flood risk in the plan area.

Policies to provide community facilities and high quality open spaces as well as the promotion of public transport and improved linkages in the area will also have positive cumulative impacts on human health. Positive cumulative impacts on cultural heritage will also be provided through the protection of monuments and structures of intrinsic interest. These are just some of the examples of positive cumulative impacts on the environment which are envisaged through the implementation of the Development Plan.

Appropriate Assessment screening will also be carried out in accordance with the Habitats Directive as part of the Development Plan process which will consider cumulative or in-combination impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

3.2.3 The transboundary nature of the effects.

It is considered that there will not be any significant transboundary effects on the environment from implementing the Plan.

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

No risks to human health or the environment due to accidents have been identified. There are no designated SEVESO sites within or adjacent to the plan area.

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

The population of Enniscorthy Town and Environs in 2006 was 9,538 persons (Census, 2006). The population for the Town and Environs as calculated by the Census 2011 is not yet available. However, Variation No. 1 of the County Development Plan estimates the population at 10,507 persons in 2010.

Significantly more land was zoned under the Enniscorthy Town and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 than is now required for the projected population during the plan period. It is therefore likely that the plan area will be reduced significantly from that shown in the 2008 Plan in line with the 'Guidance Note on Core Strategies' issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in November 2010. This guidance notes recommends that the zoning objectives for 'excess' residential zoned lands should be addressed through:

- a. phasing of development
- b. alternative zoning objectives
- c. deletion of the zoning objective

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

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;

Archaeology

Enniscorthy is a historic town and is included on the Record of Monuments and Places. The Development Plan will include policies and objectives to protect and preserve monuments in the plan area. Any planning applications within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument will be subject to individual assessment. Monitoring of subsurface works shall be required in certain instances. Preservation in situ will be the preferred option but in certain circumstances preservation by record may be considered.

Architectural Heritage

There are currently 86 structures in Enniscorthy on the Record of Protected Structures. The Development Plan will contain policies and objectives to protect such structures. Any planning applications to extend or alter protected structures, or applications for development within the vicinity of the structures, shall be individually assessed for their impacts on the structure and its setting.

Natural Heritage

The Slaney River Valley SAC runs through the plan area. The site is designated due to the presence of a number of habitats and species listed on Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive. The policies and objectives of the Development Plan will seek to ensure that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the designated sites from development within the plan boundary. Appropriate Assessment screening will also be carried out in accordance with the Habitats Directive as part of the Development Plan process which will consider cumulative or in-combination impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;

The Development Plan will include environmental policies and objectives will seek to reduce the overall impact of future developments on existing habitats and species and environmentally sensitive locations.

(c) intensive land use

The Development Plan will contain a development strategy based around land use and density objectives as well as design guidelines appropriate to the existing character of the area, with particular regard to the Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (DEHLG, December 2008). This development strategy will seek to reduce the potentially negative impacts of intensive land use. It is not expected that the intensification of land uses in the Plan will be such that vulnerable areas will be significantly affected.

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

The policies and objectives of the Development Plan will seek to ensure that there will be no significant adverse impacts on designated sites from development within the plan boundary. Appropriate Assessment screening will also be carried out in accordance with the Habitats Directive as part of the Development Plan process which will consider cumulative or in-combination impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

4.0 Conclusion and Determination

Having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) and local considerations it is considered that the proposed Development Plan, if unmitigated, has the potential to have significant effects on the environment. Enniscorthy Town Council and Wexford County Council have therefore determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment should be undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of the Enniscorthy Town and Environs Development Plan 2014-2020.