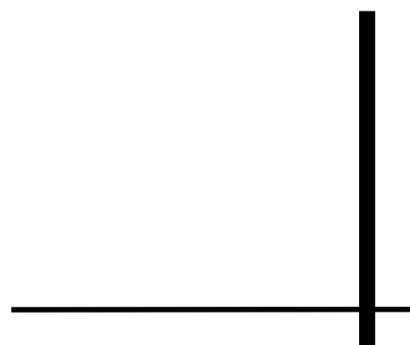


SECTION 4

Statement on the Likely Significant Effects on the Environment of Implementing the Plan



4.01 Strategic Environmental Assessment - Legal Context

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans and programmes that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including land use planning. The following Regulations were introduced which transposed this Directive into Irish law:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004) and
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004).

The SEA Regulations state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. Where plans fall below or outside of the specified thresholds a screening report is required to be carried out to determine whether the making and implementation of a particular plan will or will not, lead to significant environmental consequences for the plan area.

Article 14A (2) of Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 states where it is proposed to prepare or amend a local area plan (for an area where the population is less than 10,000) the local authority are required, prior to giving notice of its intentions to prepare or amend a local area plan, to consider whether or not the implementation of the local area plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The criteria against which this is required to be measured/screened is set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

4.02 Purpose of the Screening Report

“Screening” is defined as *“the process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA”* (Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, 2004, Guidelines for Regional & Planning Authorities, pg 12).

The population of Carrick-on-Shannon is 2,595 (CSO, 2006), thus falling below the specified threshold of 10,000 population therefore a screening report is required. The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

As already mentioned, the criteria for determining whether an SEA is required is set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

This report has been prepared in order to determine whether the preparation of the Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon 2010-2016 will or will not have any likely significant environmental effects in terms of the SEA requirements.

4.03 Assessment

An assessment of the proposed Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon 2010-2016 in terms of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 is set out as below. The assessment has been carried out in the order in which the criteria have been laid out in the above mentioned Schedule 2 A.

Criteria for Determining Whether a Plan is Likely to Have Significant Effects on the Environment

4.03.01 The character of the plan having regard, in particular, to;

- i) *The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources;*

Assessment:

The Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan will set out a development framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of Carrick-on-Shannon and for the conservation and enhancement of its natural and man made environment. The plan will seek to provide guidance in the form of policies and objectives for the development of social, physical and environmental infrastructure in a sustainable manner for Carrick-on-Shannon. The plan will provide; a statutory land use framework and land-use zoning matrix, a detailed framework for determining planning applications and will establish a basis for co-ordinating development through prescribed development standards, policies and objectives while protecting and enhancing the natural and man made environment.

- ii) *The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy;*

Assessment:

The Plan will be informed by the hierarchy of national policy (National Spatial Strategy), regional (Regional Planning Guidelines) and local plans (County Development Plan). In particular, the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan will be in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and the commitment to the enhancement and protection of the natural and man made environment as set out in the County Development Plan 2009-2015.

It is not anticipated that the plan will have a significant environmental effect on any other plans – it will only influence any future plans that may be prepared for designated lands within the proposed town boundary.

- iii) *The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;*

Assessment

The Plan will be in accordance with the provisions set out in Part II, Chapter II, Sections 18-20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and therefore related to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Plan will be consistent with the objectives of the County Development Plan which itself was the subject of an SEA. The Plan will ensure that developments in the Carrick-on-Shannon area will be carried out in a co-ordinated sustainable manner that is sympathetic to the existing character of the area. The plan will have due regard to the specific needs and attributes of the area while conforming with the relevant environmental provisions of the various plans, legislation and guidance documents which will inform the making of the plan. Examples of these documents include, but are not limited to:

The National Development Plan
National Spatial Strategy
Border Regional Planning Guidelines
The County Development Plan 2009-2015
Development Management Guidelines -June 2007
Development Plans Guidelines -June 2007
Landscape and Landscape Assessment and Appendices 2000
Retail Planning Guidelines 2005
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 2004
Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005
Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2007
Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2008 & companion document "Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide" 2008.
The Government White Paper "Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland 2007-2020".

iv) Environmental problems relevant to the plan

Assessment

The development boundary of the current LAP is in close proximity to a proposed Natural Heritage Area, however, it is not envisaged for the reasons set out in 4.03.2 v) below, that the boundaries of the town will be extended to include these sensitive lands. The protection and conservation of this area is important from a local and national perspective and this will be reflected in the approach taken in making the new LAP for Carrick-on-Shannon. Environmental considerations will be taken into account in the making of the Plan.

Having regard to the location of the town along the River Shannon, one area of particular interest is the issue relating to flood risk management. It is intended that a flood risk study of the town will be carried out and this will influence any zoning or rezoning as appropriate in the town.

No significant environmental problems have been identified or are envisaged in relation to the proposed plan.

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

Assessment

Issues relating to European Union Legislation on the environment are provided for in the County Development Plan 2009-2015. The Plan will be consistent with the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan which itself was the subject of an SEA. The LAP will therefore be guided and informed by the relevant European legislation on the environment including; waste management and water protection policies and objectives as set out in the County Development Plan 2009-2015.

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

- i) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;*

Assessment

The land which will be the subject of the LAP is currently zoned under the current Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan. It is not anticipated the new LAP will zone significantly more land than is already zoned, if any at all (refer to 4.03.2 v below). The land use assigned to existing zoning will be reviewed and revised if appropriate. The lifetime of the LAP will be 6 years from the date of its adoption and will be renewed every 6 years. The implementation of the Carrick-on-Shannon LAP shall impact on the entire plan area in a phased manner throughout the lifetime of the plan. It is intended that the plan shall, in the main, continue the already established (under the current LAP) development pattern for the future of the area. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be a certain amount of habitats/species lost as a direct result of development, the Council intends to reduce the overall impact through appropriate policies and objectives. It is considered that there will be no significant negative effects arising from implementing the plan and that the plan will continue to have a positive contribution on the area. It is expected that the positive effects would, in the main, be permanent and therefore irreversible.

- ii) The cumulative nature of the effects;*

Assessment

The focus on the principles of sustainable development will ensure that there are no notable adverse cumulative negative effects on the environment. The development of Carrick-on-Shannon will occur in a phased manner and in accordance with the Settlement Strategy of the Leitrim County Development Plan 2009-2015 and targets set by the Regional Planning Guidelines which are currently under review and again for which a SEA will be prepared. It is anticipated that the town of Carrick-on-Shannon will grow in a planned and sustainable manner.

- iii) The transboundary nature of effects;*

Assessment

No likely significant transboundary effects have been identified.

- iv) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);*

Assessment

There are no SEVESO sites in or near the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan area and as such, possible risks to human health or the environment due to accidents have not been identified. There are no risks to human health or the environment envisaged arising from the Plan.

- v) *The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population) likely to be affected due to:*

Assessment

The total LAP area of the existing LAP for Carrick-on-Shannon is circa 390 hectares. It is not envisaged that the existing development boundaries will change significantly in the new LAP. The population of Carrick-on-Shannon in 2006 was 2,595. It is expected that the potential population of Carrick-on-Shannon in 2016 will increase by 948 or (380 residential units – 2.5 persons per household) to 3,543. A survey of all existing, permitted and under construction residential units in Carrick-on-Shannon was carried out in August 08 and it was found that there were 368 residential units either under construction, vacant or permitted but not yet constructed. In addition, the housing land availability returns for 2008 indicate that there are approximately 86 hectares of undeveloped zoned land available for residential development. As these figures indicate, it is not envisaged that there will be a need to zone significantly more undeveloped lands for residential development than are currently zoned for residential purposes in the town to accommodate the future growth of the town.

- vi) *The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*

- a) *special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;*

Assessment

There are no Natura sites (SAC's or SPA's) located either within the current development boundary of the town or close to the town. There are no Natural Heritage Areas or Proposed Natural Heritage areas within the boundaries of the town plan area. As already mentioned there is a proposed Natural Heritage Area located outside of the current town boundary and to the North West of the town as indicated on Map 2. *Current Carrick-on-Shannon LAP 2004-2010 Town Boundary*

The Plan area contains cultural heritage in the form of Recorded Monuments, Zone of Archaeological Interest and Protected Structures, all of which are listed for protection under the County Development Plan 2009-2015. An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is also included in the plan area and this was also identified in the County Development Plan 2009-2015 which was the subject of an SEA. The purpose of the ACA is to give the necessary protection to the buildings and urban environment. It will be the intention of the Plan to preserve and/or enhance those buildings, structures, trees, open spaces, archaeological remains, views and other elements which contribute to the unique character of the area. All planning applications will be referred to the relevant bodies for comments as appropriate and will be dealt with to best practice standards.

Policies and objectives to protect the area's cultural characteristics and the special natural characteristics will be included in the plan.

- b) *exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;*

Assessment

It is anticipated that environmental quality standards will not be exceeded and that the value of the area will not be limited as a result of the implementation of the LAP. The plan will contain objectives and policies which will aim to reduce the overall impact of development in the plan area in order to protect the environmental qualities of the area.

c) *intensive land-use***Assessment**

The LAP will contain various strategies including a land use strategy, urban design strategy, conservation strategy and infrastructure and environmental protection strategy. Design guidelines and development standards will be included in the plan and the LAP will be guided by the various Guidance Documents issued by the DoEHLG such as the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2007 and the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2008 & companion document "Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide" 2008. It is not envisaged that the existing development boundaries of the current LAP will be significantly extended for reasons as outlined under 2 v) above and it is not expected that environmentally sensitive areas will be significantly impacted upon.

vii) *The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European union or international protection status.***Assessment**

There are no sites within the development boundaries of the current LAP which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status. There is a proposed Natural Heritage Area located to the north west of the town (see Map 2). This area also lies within an area of High Visual Amenity (HVA) as identified in the County Development Plan 2009-2015. It is not envisaged that the boundaries of the current LAP will be significantly extended having regard to the current number of permitted/vacant residential units and the amount of undeveloped zoned lands for residential development currently in Carrick-on-Shannon (approx. 86 hectares – based on the 2008 housing land availability returns). However, should further lands be zoned it is unlikely to be in this particular area having regard to:

- the location of the current preferred route for the N.4 Carrick-on-Shannon By-Pass which is runs through these lands and
- the sensitive nature of the area (proposed NHA and HVA).

It is not considered that any development consequent to the implementation of the Carrick-on-Shannon LAP will have a detrimental effect on any such areas.

4.04 Conclusion

An SEA is not mandatory for the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan as its current and projected population is less than 10,000. Leitrim County Council has carried out an assessment in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 and initially concluded that the environmental effects of implementing the LAP are unlikely to be significant and therefore an SEA will not be required for the Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan. The Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan will be carried out in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and the commitment to the enhancement and protection of the natural and man made environment as set out in the County Development Plan 2009-2015 which itself was the subject of an SEA.

A final determination was not made however until the specified environmental authorities (the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG)) were consulted. The above bodies are invited to make a submission or observation in relation to whether or not the proposed Local Area Plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Of the three bodies consulted, two responded, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. No response was received from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Having had regard to the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 and having consulted with the Environmental Authorities and considered their submissions, it is the determination of the Planning Authority under Article 14 A (5) of the Regulations that a strategic environmental assessment is not required in respect of the proposed Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon 2010-2016.

Appropriate Assessment

The Plan would not adversely affect any sites of significant environmental importance in terms of the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Accordingly the requirements in respect of an Appropriate Assessment do not apply.