

Environmental Statement for Amendment 1: New Railway Station and Park and Ride Facility' to the Blarney Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2005

1.1 Background

1.1.1. On the 27th November 2006 the members of Cork County Council adopted Amendment 1: 'New Railway Station and Park and Ride Facility' to the Blarney Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2005. This amendment provides for the development of the site for a New Railway Station and Park and Ride Facility and amends the development boundary of Little Island to include the entire site required for the railway station and park and ride facility.

The amendment was accompanied by a complementary variation (Variation 5) to the County Development Plan 2003. The purpose of this variation was to remove the said A1 Metropolitan Green Belt designation from the portion of the site that lay within it.

1.1.2. Following a scoping exercise carried out in consultation with the EPA and the DoEHLG an Environmental Report was prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004). This report was put on public display alongside the then proposed amendment and complementary variation from the 15th September to 27th October, 2006 and during this period of public consultation, the public and interested parties were invited to submit comments and observations on all three documents.

1.2 The Environmental Statement

1.2.1. The requirements of the SEA Directive as translated into Irish Law under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, Article 14(I) require that as soon as may be following the making or amendment of a local area plan the planning authority shall prepare an environmental statement, the purpose of which is to summarise how the following points were taken into account during the preparation or amendment of the plan:

a. *How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan.*

In preparing the amendment and the environmental report an assessment of baseline environmental characteristics was carried out. This included a desk-top and visual (site) assessment addressing soils and geology, potential effects on watercourses, bio-diversity/flora and fauna, population and human health, air quality and climatic factors, material assets and cultural heritage, landscape and visual impact. This identified the principle environmental effects and their significance.

b. *How the environmental report prepared pursuant to article 14B and submissions and observations made to the planning authority in response to a notice under section 20(3) of the Act, consultations under article 14F have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan.*

The Environmental Report and Issues raised in submissions were received and reported on by the County Manager to the Council in November 2006 and after discussion it was agreed to slightly modify the amendment by inserting additional text into the specific objective. The adopted specific objective now reads "It is an objective of this plan to reserve this site for a New Railway Station and Park and Ride Facility subject to consultation with the Health and

Safety Authority". This modification was considered to be of a non material nature.

c. The reasons for choosing the plan or amendment, as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

The Environmental Report concluded that the major effects of the amendment and variation would concern population and human health, with the most significant adverse impact of the proposal likely to be the minor increase in traffic on certain roads. This was considered to be of local importance and was considered in the context of an overall decrease in traffic impacts. It is considered that the potential for visual impact associated with the proposal is capable of mitigation, to a degree, at the part VIII (Part VIII of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001) planning procedure stage.

The measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with article 14J, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or amended plan.

The baseline environmental assessment of the plan informed a series of potential mitigation measures which were identified in the report and included primarily the following key processes, preparation of an ecological assessment and the Part VIII Planning Process. In addition the monitoring measures, which could also be taken into account in the above processes, are outlined in the following table:

Environmental Category	Nature of potential effect	Possible Indicators
Biodiversity (Fauna and flora)	Loss of flora, fauna, habitats, or bio-diversity	Visual and biological changes
Population and human health	Risk of traffic accident	Number of traffic accidents on road network caused by traffic on access routes to site.
Soil/water	Ground and surface water pollution and soil contamination	Measure the levels of water and soil contamination
Air quality, noise and climatic factors	Air and noise pollution	Measure the levels of air and noise contamination
Material assets and cultural heritage	No known effects	N/A
Landscape	Unlikely to be any significant effect on landscape.	Visual assessment of proposed buildings and structures and landscaping.