

Macroom Town Council

**Macroom Town Council Development Plan 2009
Variation No. 1**

SEA Screening Statement

Cork County Council
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Macroom Town Council
June 2013

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Page 1 of 1

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Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Legal Context and Purpose of this Screening Report	1
2	Proposed Variation to the Plan	3
2.1	Background Information	3
2.2	The Core Strategy	3
2.3	Flood Risk Management	6
2.4	Habitats Directive Compliance	9
3	SEA Screening	10
3.1	Evaluation of effects.....	10
3.2	Issues to be considered by Macroom Town Council.....	17
4	Statutory Consultation	18
4.1	Consultation with Environmental Authorities.....	18
4.2	Determination for Appropriate Assessment	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3	Determination:	18

Macroom Town Council

Core Strategy Variation
SEA Screening Statement

June 2013

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Macroom Town Council Town Development Plan 2009-2015, adopted by Macroom Town Council, is the statutory development plan for the town of Macroom and came into effect on 14th December 2009. The Plan contains a range of policies and objectives designed to achieve the stated core aims including specific policies in relation to housing, economic development and employment, recreation and amenity, environment and heritage etc., and provides a framework for the development of the Town for the period 2009-2015. During the review process the plan underwent environmental assessment in accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC), Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 and the Habitats Assessment Directive (92/43/EEC).

1.1.2 This Variation is the first variation to the Plan since it was adopted and is in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The purpose of this variation, which is dealt with in three parts, is to;

- a) introduce a 'core strategy' section to the Plan as prescribed by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010,
- b) update the Plan to reflect the provisions of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management', which were published in November 2009, including revised text and objectives detailing the approach of the Planning Authority to development in areas at risk of flooding.
- c) Update the text of the plan to comply with the obligations on planning authorities under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

1.2 Legal Context and Purpose of this Screening Report

1.2.1 The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004) require a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the case of variations to Development Plans where they are likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

1.2.2 "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).

1.2.3 The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the proposed variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan will or will not have any likely significant environmental effects in terms of the SEA requirements and thus whether the Variation requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The criteria for determining whether an SEA is required are set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

1.2.4 SEA Screening involves formal consideration of:

- a) the characteristics of the Plan; and
- b) the characteristics of the environmental effects of the Plan and the area likely to be affected.

1.2.5 An assessment of the variation in terms of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations is set out in Section 3 of this report.

2 Variation to the Plan

2.1 Background Information

2.1.1 The purpose of this variation of the Macroom Town Development Plan, 2009, which is dealt with in three parts, is to;

- a) introduce a core strategy, as prescribed by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010,
- b) include revised text arising from the obligations on planning authorities under section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts in relation to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management and
- c) include revised text to comply with the obligations on planning authorities under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive

2.2 The Core Strategy

2.2.1 Part A of the variation to the Macroom Town Council Development Plan deals with the inclusion of the 'Core Strategy' for Macroom and affects Section 1.1 and Section 1.2 of Volume and Section 2.6 of Volume 2 of the Plan.

2.2.2 The 'Core Strategy' for Macroom Town Council addresses the requirements relating to 'Core Strategies' introduced by the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2010 and has a time horizon to the year 2020. The Core Strategy' has been prepared so that it is consistent with relevant national, regional and local strategies and in this context it draws on the Core Strategy of the Cork County Development Plan 2009, the South West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010, the sub regional Cork Area Strategic Plan /CASP Update (2001-2020), the North and West Cork Strategic Plan (2002-2020) and the National Spatial Strategy.

2.2.3 All the national, regional and county levels plans have endorsed the national population targets for 2020, which indicates that Macroom could reach a total 2020 population of 4,351. This represents an increase of 472 persons or 12% over the 2011 population.

2.2.4 The population split between the Town Council area and the environs of the town is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Macroom Population and Households 2006-2020				
	Census 2006	Census 2011	Target 2020	Growth 2011-2020
Population				
Town Council Area	3,407	3,738	4,210	472*
Environs	146	141	141	0
Town & Environs	3,553	3,879	4,351**	472
Households				
Town Council Area	1244	1375	1,747	372
Environs	41	42	59	17
Town & Environs	1,285	1417	1,806	389
*The population growth for Macroom, as set out in this core strategy has been directed to the town Council Administrative Area given the land supply available within the area. ** Target as per the Cork County Development Plan Core Strategy Variation 2010.				

2.2.5 In line with national and international trends, average household size is expected to continue to decline. In line with the Regional Planning Guidelines, it is assumed that average household will be 2.41 persons by 2020. In 2020 it is therefore expected that there will be 1,806 households within the town as a whole.

2.2.6 Population growth within the Town Council area is estimated at 472 persons for the period 2011-2020. By 2020 the number of households within the Town Council area is expected to be 1,747, an increase of 372 over the 2011 level. There is no additional population growth targeted for the environs of Macroom. The additional household growth for the environs, as set out in Table 1, will in turn be accommodated within the town council area. As a result, the total household growth for the town council area will be 389. Allowing for a vacancy rate of 15%, this level of household growth could give rise to the need for an additional 447 housing units.

2.2.7 An examination of Geodirectory data for the period 2006-2011 suggests that a substantial proportion of this target may already have been provided within the town council area.

Table 2: Housing Demand 2011-20			
	Population Growth 2011-2020	H/Hold Growth 2011-2020	Housing Units 2011-2020
Macroom Town	472	389	447

Land availability within the town boundary

2.2.8 The 2009 Town Plan zones 54.5 hectares of land for medium and low density residential development, capable of providing between 1,184 and 1,397 housing units, depending on the final density to which it is developed. While this level of land supply is well in excess of that required to meet the development needs of the town over the lifetime of the plan, the provisions of Section 21(a) of the Fourth Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in relation to compensation, mitigate against changing the zoning during the life of the plan. In this context it is considered appropriate at this stage to retain the zonings as adopted in 2009 but to use phasing to manage the land supply within the town.

2.2.9 At the next full review of the Town Development Plan (the review is due to commence in 2013), the quantum of zoned lands required to meet the housing needs of the town can be fully assessed in line with the Core Strategy requirements of the 2000 Act, and the Guidelines on preparing Development Plans. In line with the provisions of the Act, lands can be dezoned as part of the review of the plan, without attracting compensation.

2.2.10 Residential lands identified for inclusion within Phase 1 comprise 24 hectares (L1 to L9 and M1 to M7 as detailed below). In addition there is a further 5.4 hectares zoned for town centre development which are expected to yield some residential development. Once this land supply is exhausted, development can proceed in a sequential manner on the lands identified for phase 2 (M8 to M17, L10 and LT1). This phasing approach aims to encourage a more sustainable pattern of residential growth, helping to consolidate the town around its existing core and bring unfinished estates to a satisfactory level of completion.

2.2.11 The following lands are retained for residential development (both Phase 1 and Phase 2) over the remaining life of the Plan:

<u>Table 3 Phasing of Residential Land</u>		
<u>Zone</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Density Yield Range</u>
<u>Phase 1</u>		
<u>M1</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>95-114 (200 permitted)</u>
<u>M2</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>M3</u>	<u>5.9</u>	<u>148 -177 (78 permitted)</u>
<u>M4</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>43-51</u>
<u>M5</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>40-48</u>
<u>M6</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>15-18</u>
<u>M7</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>40- 48</u>
<u>L1</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>L2</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>L3</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>L4</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>L5</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>L6</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>L7</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>L8</u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>L9</u>	<u>0.6</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>486-565</u>
<u>Phase 2</u>		
<u>M8</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>40- 48</u>
<u>M9</u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>20-24</u>
<u>M10</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>33-39</u>
<u>M11</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>M12</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>163-195</u>
<u>M13</u>	<u>4.8</u>	<u>120-144</u>
<u>M14</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>78-93</u>
<u>M15</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>38-45</u>
<u>M16</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>55-66</u>
<u>M17</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>83-99</u>
<u>L10</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>LT1</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>30.5</u>	<u>698-832</u>
<u>Total P1 + P2</u>	<u>54.5</u>	<u>1184-1397</u>

Water Services Infrastructure

2.2.12 In order to facilitate additional development in Macroom additional investment in water and sanitation infrastructure is required. In the short term investment is required in the waste water treatment plant, which is currently operating above capacity and is affected by flooding. In the medium to long term investment is required in the town's water supply - new water sources, treatment and reservoir facilities.

Effect of Core Strategy Changes

2.2.13 The Macroom Town Plan 2009 outlined the potential of Macroom town to reach a population in the order of 6,794 to 7,797 persons by 2014. In keeping with the Core

Strategy adopted at County level and the provisions of the Regional Planning Guidelines, this Core Strategy sets a target population for the town and its environs of 4,351 persons by 2020, allowing for growth of 472 persons in the period to 2020. This represents a significant reduction in the scale of development envisaged within the town over the remaining life of the 2009 Town Plan, with a corresponding reduction in the potential for environmental impact. .

2.3 Flood Risk Management

2.3.1 Part B of the Variation updates the Plan to reflect the requirements of the Guidelines on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' and includes changes to Volumes 1 and 2 of the Plan. These changes include additional policies and objectives detailing the Councils approach to development in areas at risk of flooding and changes to particular objectives to ensure flood risk assessment are integrated with development proposals. The scope of the changes reflects the approach to flood risk assessment outlined below.

Background Context.

2.3.2 European Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks requires Member States to carry out a preliminary assessment by 2011 in order to identify the river basins and associated coastal areas at risk of flooding. For such zones, flood risk maps are required to be drawn up by 2013. Flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness must be established by 2015. In August 2011 the OPW published a Draft National Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment report covering the whole country for public consultation.

2.3.3 In November 2009, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and the Office of Public Works, published the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines. These are aimed at ensuring a more consistent, rigorous and systematic approach which will fully incorporate flood risk assessment and management into the planning system. Local authorities are required to have regard to flood risk identification, assessment and management processes when preparing or varying development plans and local area plans and in consideration of applications for planning permission.

Variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan

2.3.4 In response to the requirements of the Guidelines, and in order to provide information about possible flood risks to the public generally and to those contemplating development, Cork County Council, in close association with the OPW, has compiled a series of indicative maps flood maps for all of County Cork showing areas that could be at risk from flooding. This information has been used in the preparation of this Variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan 2009.

2.3.5 The information about flood risks in County Cork has been collated from a number of sources including:

- a) Draft River Lee Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (Lee CFRAMS) commissioned and published by the Office of Public Works.
- b) 'Floodmaps.ie' – The national flood hazard mapping website operated by the Office of Public Works, where information about past flood events is recorded and made available to the public. 'Flood point' information is available on this site and has been noted.

- c) 'Draft Flood Hazard Mapping' for fluvial and tidal areas commissioned by Cork County Council from Consultants JBA Associates. These indicative flood extent maps provide flood extent information for river catchments where a more detailed CFRAMS study is not currently available.

2.3.6 In line with advice from the OPW this information has been amalgamated into a single 'Indicative Flood Extent Map' for Macroom. The map shows areas within the town with a High probability (Zone A) and a Moderate probability (Zone B) of fluvial flooding.

2.3.7 The inclusion of an Indicative Flood Extent map for Macroom is the first step in managing flood risk in the future. The map is indicative in nature and is intended to primarily function as a screening tool. The areas at risk may be more or less extensive in practice than indicated in the flood mapping. The mapping will be refined where possible over time as more detailed flood risk assessments are completed.

2.3.8 The main risk of flooding in Macroom arises from fluvial flooding from the River Sullane and this is the only type of flood risk which is reflected in the Indicative Flood Extent Map. Other sources of flood risk, which are not reflected on the map, include pluvial flooding associated with periods of high intensity rainfall and groundwater flooding which is caused by groundwater escaping from the ground when the water table rises to or above ground level. These risks will need to be assessed at the project stage.

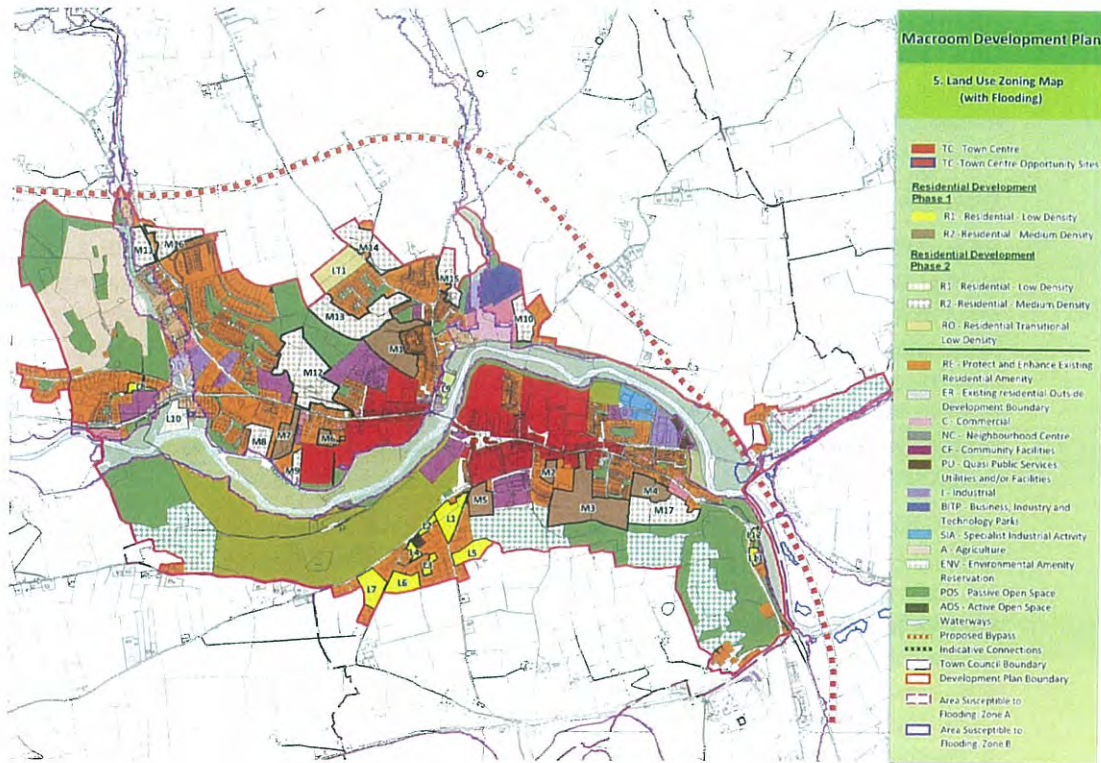
Approach to Managing Flood Risk

2.3.9 The Guidelines for Planning Authorities 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management' require planning authorities to ensure that development is not permitted in areas of flood risk, particularly floodplains, except where there are no suitable alternative sites available in areas at lower risk that are consistent with the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development. Where such development has to take place, in the case of urban regeneration for example, the type of development has to be carefully considered and the risks should be mitigated and managed through location, layout and design of the development to reduce flood risk to an acceptable level.

2.3.10 Some of the zoned lands in Macroom are at risk of flooding. However, having regard to the provisions of Section 21(a) of the Fourth Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the Planning Authority has decided not to dezone any of this land, as to do so by variation during the term of a development plan, could leave the authority open to claims for compensation were planning permission refused on zoning grounds. Instead, as an interim measure pending the full review of the plan (due to commence in 2013), additional safeguards have been introduced to deal with the issue of flood risk. Specifically, all development proposed within an area of flood risk must be accompanied by a site specific flood risk assessment demonstrating compliance with the Guidelines on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management', including the development plan justification test. In these cases planning permission will only be considered where the findings of the site specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that the proposal complies with the requirements of the Guidelines.

2.3.11 At the next full review of the Town Development Plan, a comprehensive assessment of the zoned lands will be undertaken, relative to the provisions of the Guidelines, and the need to change the zoning of lands at risk of flooding will be fully assessed at that stage.

2.3.12 It is considered that the approach outlined above will allow for the sustainable development of Macroom while managing flood risk in an appropriate manner as required by the Guidelines, pending a full review of the Town Development Plan which is due to commence in 2013.



2.4 Habitats Directive Compliance

2.4.1 Part C of the variation refers to changes arising from the obligations on Planning Authorities under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

2.4.2 The changes in this part of the Variation relate to Chapters 3, 5 and the Reference Maps of Volume 2 and comprise the deletion of existing policies on the preservation of natural and built heritage and the insertion of more new policies (revised wording) that will ensure the planning authority complies with its obligations under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects in the environment	Likely to have significant environmental effects? (Negative)	Comment/Summary of significant environmental effects
		afford more protection to all natural heritage sites which are designated or proposed for designation under National and European Legislation which will lessen the potential impact of development on the environment.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,	No. No. No.	<p>Part A: One of the main functions of the Core Strategy element of the Variation is to ensure that the Macroom Town Plan complies with the population targets as set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines for South West Region 2010. The Macroom Town Council Development Plan is at the lower end of the hierarchy of land use plans in the county. It is not considered that the proposed variation to the Plan would have a significant influence on other plans.</p> <p>Part B. The new approach to flood risk management will impact directly on specific development projects within the areas at risk but will lessen the potential impact of development on the environment.</p> <p>Part C. It is not considered that the proposed variation to the Plan will have a significant influence on other plans. The strengthened approach to the protection of natural heritage sites will impact directly on some development projects but will lessen the potential impact of development on the environment.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No.	<p>It is considered that the proposed variation would have a positive effect on other environmental considerations and promote sustainable development:</p> <p>Part A: The Plan adopted in 2009 was subject to a full Strategic Environmental Assessment Process. This variation brings further clarity to the population and household targets for the town for the period to 2020, which are significantly lower than those set out in the 2009 Plan. The Plan has been changed to include objectives re the phasing of the available land supply, pending a review of the development plan in 2013.</p> <p>The 2009 Plan acknowledged that the towns WWTP was already operating above capacity and committed to ensuring that no new development took place until such time as additional capacity was provided. The Variation has strengthened these provisions of the plan to ensure that the additional treatment capacity is provided and operational in advance of the</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects in the environment	Likely to have significant environmental effects? (Negative)	Comment/Summary of significant environmental effects
		Risk Management and the better protection of natural heritage will have a positive impact on human health, quality of life and the environment generally.
the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	No.	<p>Parts A-C.</p> <p>The area that will be directly affected by the proposed variation is that which lies within the administrative boundary of Macroom Town Council. The population of this area and the environs is approximately 3,879 (CSO, 2011), a 12% increase of population levels in 2006. The Town Council Development plan also covers an area of approximately 1,095 hectares.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(a) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</p> <p>(b) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</p> <p>(c) Intensive land use.</p>	No.	<p>Part A</p> <p>a) The Gearagh cSAC, SPA and pNHA is located to the south of Macroom town centre and abuts the Town Council Administrative boundary. The Gearagh is a Natura 2000 site. The proposed variation includes a number of revisions to the Plan, which will ensure greater protection for Natura 2000 sites and ensure that that Plan will not give rise to potentially significant impacts for any Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>In particular revised objectives in relation to water services seek to ensure that adequate water and water services infrastructure is provided in tandem with development and is operational before any discharges arise.</p> <p>Revised flooding policy and requirement for site specific flood risk assessment, appropriate assessment and SuDS, will enhance protection for natural and cultural heritage sites.</p> <p>b) It is not anticipated that this Variation will give rise to any environmental quality standards being exceeded. On the contrary it is anticipated that there will be positive impacts on environmental quality standards. The Macroom Town Council Development Plan contains a number of policies relating to the protection of environmental quality. All development(s) will be subject to the development planning and management processes.</p> <p>c) This variation does not propose the intensification of any land uses.</p>

3.3 Issues to be considered by Macroon Town Council.

Risk of Compensation:

3.3.1 The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides that there shall be no presumption in law that any land zoned in a particular development plan shall remain so zoned in any subsequent development plan. This means that if land is zoned for development in one development plan, and the zoning is subsequently removed in a later development plan, there is no right to compensation. Similarly, the Act states that if a development is refused planning permission because the lands are at risk of flooding, compensation is not payable.

3.3.2 However, the provisions of Section 21(a) of the Fourth Schedule of the Act are such that changing the zoning of land during the normal six year lifespan of a development plan, could leave the Planning Authority open to claims for compensation where the change in zoning results in the refusal of planning permission. Therefore, if the Council decided to dezone some land now, midway through the six year life of the 2009 Town Plan, it would be leaving itself open to a claim for compensation.

3.3.3 For the purposes of the proposed Variation, the Town Council has therefore decided to retain, in the short term, the broad land use zoning objectives of the 2009 Plan as adopted, pending the substantive review of the plan. At the next full review of the Town Development Plan (the review is due to commence in 2013), the quantum and location of zoned lands required to meet the housing needs of the town can be fully assessed in line with the Core Strategy requirements of the 2000 Act, and the Guidelines on preparing Development Plans and the Guidelines on flood risk management. In line with the provisions of the Act, lands can be zoned as part of the review of the plan, without attracting compensation.

3.3.4 In recognition of the fact that some of the zoned lands are at risk of flooding, it is proposed to mitigate this risk by ensuring that all proposals for development within the area at risk are accompanied by a site specific flood risk assessment. In these cases planning permission will only be considered where the findings of the site specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that the proposal complies with the requirements of the Guidelines on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management', including the requirements of the Development Plan/ Development Management Justification Tests as outlined in the Guidelines.

3.3.5 This approach is considered reasonable, and in the public interest, as it avoids the risk of compensation and ensures that development will only proceed in situations where it complies with the requirements of the Guidelines on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management', thus managing the risks at the project level and ensuring there will be no significant adverse environmental effect. In fact it is considered that the Variation will have a positive impact on the environment by ensuring that all development proposals comply with these requirements.

4 Statutory Consultation

4.1 Consultation .

4.1.1 On the basis of the initial assessment outlined in Section 3 and following consultation with the Environmental Authorities, Macroom Town Council formed the view that the Variation did not have the potential to cause significant effects on the environment on the basis that adequate safeguards have been included in the Variation to mitigate against such effects. It was therefore considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required in respect of the variation.

4.1.2 On completion of the initial assessment in relation to SEA, Macroom Town Council consulted with specified environmental authorities as required under Article 13A (4) of the Regulations, namely :

- a) The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- b) The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
- c) The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- d) The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- e) Cork County Council (as an adjoining Planning Authority)

4.1.3 In response, just one submission was received from the Environmental Protection Agency which acknowledged the inclusion of new and amended objectives re flood risk management and the protection of designated conservation sites, and the proposal to review plan zonings in areas at risk of flooding during the plan review period. Submission noted that adequate and appropriate infrastructure should be in place to serve development during the lifetime of the plan. Finally submission sought clarification re requirements for that Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment Screening and recommended minor changes to objective NE-7 which have been reflected in the published Variation.

4.2 Determination

4.2.1 Based on the above assessment, and the findings of the Natura Impact Assessment , the Council has determined, in accordance with Section 13k (4) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011, (SI No. 201 of 2011), that the likely effects on the environment of the variation are not such as to require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. The variation will enhance the protection afforded to the environment and does not make provision for any additional development, policies or objectives which could have a negative impact on the environment.