

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

Variation No 2 of the Dundalk and Environs
Development Plan 2009-2015

06th of March 2013

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 SEA – 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) as amended in 2011 and;
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 - S.I. No. 201/2011.

The 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 or programmes 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 (as amended in 2011) states under 13k *"Where a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A"*. The criterion against which this is required to be measured and screened is set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.

1.2 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).

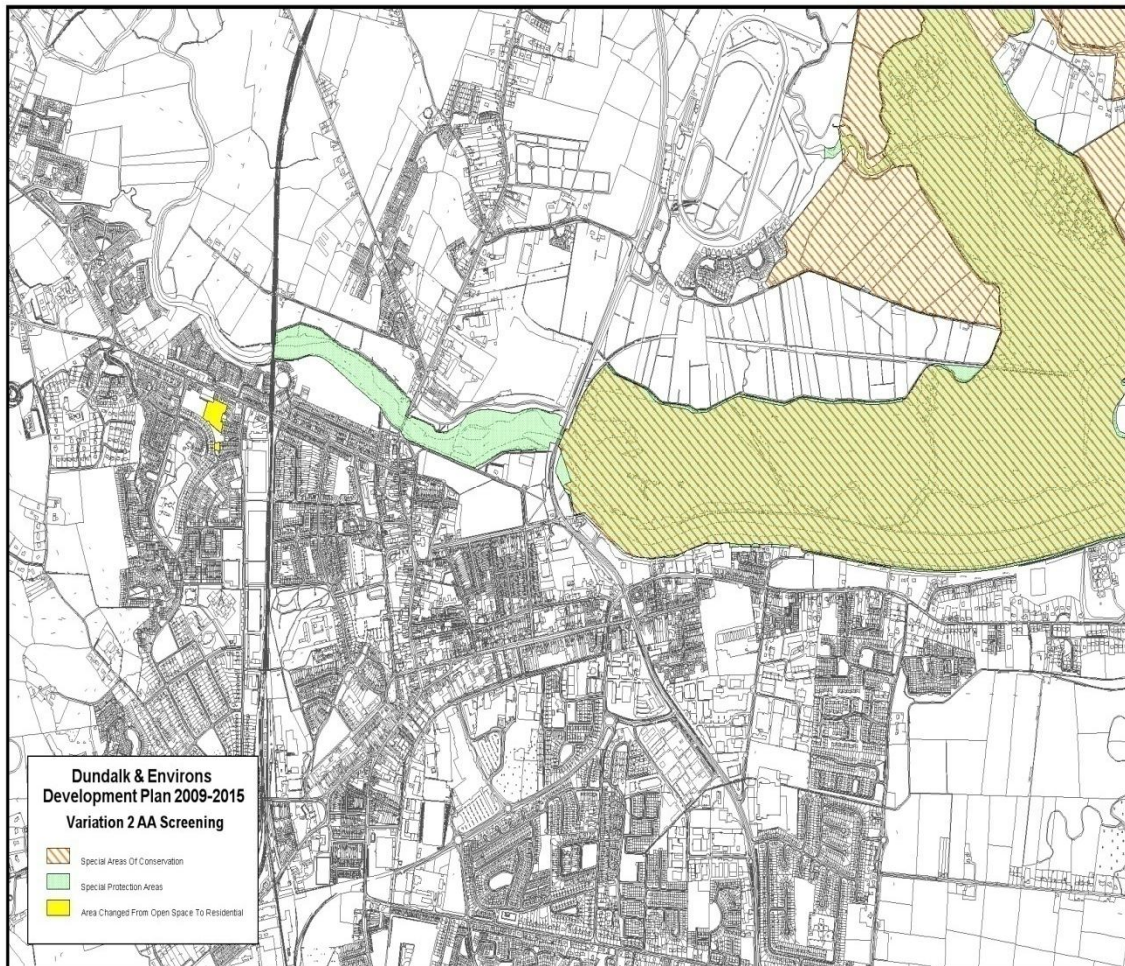
This draft variation of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 includes amendments and/or additions to existing land use objective in the current development plan. The Planning Authority is proposing this Variation to the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 which includes a change of land use type from Recreation, Amenity & Open Space (RAO) to Residential 1 (RES1).

Consultation with the Environmental Bodies was undertaken by Louth Local Authorities to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This screening assessment was forwarded to five environmental bodies (details in Section 4.0) and a period of three weeks from 12th of February to the 05th March was invited for submissions to the Local Authority.

1.3 Variation No. 2 of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015.

Variation No 2 of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 includes a proposed zoning change from Recreation, Amenity and Open Space to Residential 1 and is illustrated in Map 1 below in the context of the adjoining Dundalk Bay SAC/SPA.

Map 1 : Area subject to proposed land use change.



2.0 Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment

2.1 Assessment

The proposed Variation No 2 includes a change of land use zoning of approximately 0.85 hectares from Residential, Amenity and Open Space to Residential 1. The purpose of this variation is to accommodate a pilot housing development to support the regeneration of the Cox's Demesne Regeneration Scheme in keeping with Policy HC 8 of the development plan as follows:

- Promote the regeneration of the Cox's Demesne and Muirhevnamor by enhancing the quality of the environment and access to community services and facilities, thereby improving the quality of life for the residents of the area.

2.2 Characteristics of the proposed plan area and variation

The area is characterised by open green space which is presently underutilised due to neglect and anti-social behaviour. The lands are located to the rear of a social housing estate a portion of which fronts onto the main Castletown Road. The lands located to the west of the site contain a football pitch. The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 supports the sustainable development of lands within the plan area and appropriate regeneration.

The areas highlighted below include the criteria, as required under Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 against which the variation is to be assessed and a full analysis of the site is included within each section.

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; A key aspect of the proposed regeneration is the delivery of a pilot project in Ashling Park located in the north east of the Dundalk West Urban Vision area. This pilot project will include the following elements;

- New build housing units,
- Sheltered accommodation,
- Ancillary parking and landscaping'
- Community facility,
- Community garden,
- Allotments,
- Trim trail.

The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy; It is not anticipated that this Variation will have a significant environmental effect on any other plans.

The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development; This Variation No. 2 of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 will be in accordance with the provisions set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and therefore related to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The development plan has had 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 inform the making of the plan. There are no proposed Tree Preservation Orders or Views to be protected within the area proposed to be included within this variation. The value of the existing open space may be described as having a low value where the existing green space has no features of interest, any mature trees or hedgerows and includes sections of burnt areas and areas of neglect.

Environmental problems relevant to the plan; The variation does not include any policies or objectives which will conflict with the plan with regard to environmental decisions. It sets out the land use objectives for additional specific requirements for any site issues to be addressed through the planning application process by way of planning permission.

The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection); Issues relating to European Union Legislation on the environment are provided for in the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015. This Variation is consistent with the policies and objectives of the Plan which itself was the subject of an SEA. This draft Variation 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 Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015.

2.3 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected having regard in particular to:

There are no characteristics of value which are likely to be affected by the change of zoning. The existing site has a low value with respect to the features of interest currently within the site.

The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects:

There are no characteristics of significant value which are likely to be affected by the change of landuse zoning and the reduction of open space facilities of the area. The current value of the lands would ensure that any adverse effect would be minimal.

The cumulative nature of the effects:

There are no further land use changes proposed at present as part of the overall Coxes Demesne regeneration scheme and as such there are no cumulative effects which are to be project led. The Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 is subject to review towards the end of 2013 and as such the amendments to this plan will be subject to a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The trans-boundary nature of the effects:

There are no trans-boundary effects from this proposed variation or any proposals related to the proposed change in land use zonings.

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

There are no risks to human health from this proposed variation.

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

The magnitude and scale of effects is such that there would be no significant effect on the existing population.

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

The value of the current open space area is limited to local low value as there are no features of interest or facilities contained within the proposed area which, if lost, may have a significant adverse effect on the received environment. There are no special natural characteristics within the proposed area or aspects of cultural heritage.

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

There are no areas or landscapes with national or European protection on or impacted by this proposed variation. This proposed variation was also subject to an Appropriate Assessment screening which determined that there would be no significant impact on the Dundalk Bay SAC or Dundalk Bay SPA.

3.0 Initial Determination of Louth County Council

Louth County Council has determined, including predraft consultation, that the proposed variation, to include a change of land use zoning of approximately 0.85 hectares from Recreation, Amenity and Open Space to Residential, would not have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore it is concluded by the SEA screening that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required for Variation No 2 of the Dundalk and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015.

4.0 List of Environmental Bodies consulted at predraft stage

The environmental bodies listed below, were given notice under Section K of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (as amended) on the determination that Variation No 2 would not have a significant effect on the environment. Submissions and observations were invited for a period of three weeks from 12th of February and 05th of March 2013. No submissions or observations were received from any of the environmental bodies during this time.

- Minister for the Environmental, Community and Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food
- EPA
- Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
- Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs,