

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Variation No 3 of the
Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016

SEA Statement

July 2012



Aquilae in Umbra
(in the shadow of the eagle)

Westport Town Council



Mayo County Council

Introduction

This is the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Statement of Variation No. 3 of the Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016.

SEA is the systematic, ongoing process of evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed before a decision is made to adopt it. It also gives the public and other interested parties an opportunity to comment and to be kept informed on decisions that may impact on the environment and how they were made.

The SEA is being carried out in order to comply with EU SEA Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into Irish law through the SEA Regulations. In order to determine if the proposed variation has any adverse impacts on any of Mayo's designated conservation sites, the Natura 2000 network, a separate assessment called a Habitat Directive Assessment was also carried out.

The SEA Statement is required to include information summarising:

1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the variation;
2. How the environmental report, the submissions/observations made to the planning authority on the proposed variation and Environmental Report have been taken into account during the preparation of the variation;
3. The reasons for choosing the variation, as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives; and
4. The measures decided upon to monitor the significant effects of implementing the variation.

Context

Westport Town Council (WTC) and Mayo County Council (MCC), hereon in referred to as 'the planning authorities', jointly commenced the variation process in March 2011 by proposing to vary the Westport Town & Development Plan 2010-2016 (hereon in referred to as 'the Plan') to reroute the proposed road corridor north of Westport Town (N5) and amend the land use zoning accordingly.

The proposed variation was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA).

The SEA Screening Report concluded that having had regard to Schedule 2A of the Planning & Development (SEA) Regulations, the proposed method of preparing Variation No. 3 and the submissions/observations received from the Environmental Authorities, the proposed variation would not be likely to have any significant adverse impacts on the environment.

The HDA Screening concluded that it was not necessary to proceed to Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment).

It was stated in the SEA determination that any modifications to the proposed variation to the Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 arising from the variation process will be screened for the need for an environmental assessment.

The proposed variation was put on display during the period 1st May 2012 to 30th May 2012 and written submissions/observations were invited on the proposed variation. Following the display period a Manager's Report was prepared on the submissions/observations received.

The members of the planning authorities considered the proposed variation, associated environmental documentation and the Manager's Report at a meeting held 21st June 2012 and on the 9th July 2012 decided to make the proposed variation as put on display with no changes.

How Environmental Considerations were integrated into Variation No. 3 of the Westport Town & Environs Plan 2010 - 2016

The variation consists of the rerouting of the proposed road corridor north of Westport Town (N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project) at the townlands of Attireesh, Carrowbeg, Deerpark East, Drummindoo, Gortaroe, Knockranny and Monamore and to amend the land use zoning accordingly.

The road corridor will be moved northwards. The variation will result in the allocation of zoned land for industrial use into one single zoned site as opposed to the current arrangement of two industrial zones severed by the proposed N5 route corridor. The proposed Variation No. 3 results in the opening up of the site thus allowing development in an unrestricted manner.

All existing policies and objectives in relation to the protection of the environment in the Plan have remained unchanged in the variation.

The SEA Screening determination stated that the proposed variation would not have a significant effect on the environment. The HDA Screening determined that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was not required. The proposed variation was not subject to any amendments so the determination still stands.

How the Environmental Report, Submissions & Observations in relation to the variation process, and any consultations with Member States have been taken into account during the preparation of the variation

Environmental Report

An Environmental Report was prepared for the Plan in 2008/2009. As the SEA Screening determined that the proposed variation would not have significant effects on the environment, the environmental report was not updated. In preparing Variation No. 3 the Environmental Report was used in the assessment of rerouting of the road corridor.

Submissions and Observations

There were two opportunities for the Environmental Authorities to make submissions on the proposed variation:

1. Submissions/observations on the proposed variation were invited during the SEA Screening process during the period 2nd April – 24th April 2012.

2. Submissions/observations on the proposed variation process were invited during the variation procedure itself during the period 1st May – 30th May 2012.

Members of the public, organisations and prescribed bodies were also invited to make submissions during the period 1st May 2012 – 30th May 2012.

One submission was received from the Environmental Authorities during the SEA Screening process and nine submissions were received from the prescribed bodies and members of the public during the variation process.

Following consideration of the submissions received on the SEA Screening it was determined that an environmental report was not required.

A Manager's Report was prepared after the display period of the proposed variation. The Manager's Report summarised the submissions/observations made and set out the manager's response and recommendation(s) to each submission/observation made.

The elected members made the variation having regard to the proposed variation, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Directive Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment documents and the Manager's Report prepared on the submissions/observations received.

Consultation with Member States

As the proposed variation would not be likely to have an impact on a member state, consultation with a member state was not required during the preparation of the variation.

Reason for choosing the variation in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with

As the proposed variation did not require an Environmental Report no alternatives were dealt with. However it should be noted that in preparing the proposed variation, the Environmental Report prepared on the original plan was used to determine any significant impacts that may arise. The N5 route corridor is subject to a separate constraints and route selection study in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Scheme. It is determined that the variation would be likely to result in neutral or beneficial impacts overall.

Measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the variation

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored.

Monitoring enables, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action. In addition to this, monitoring can also play an important role in assessing whether the Plan as varied is achieving its environmental objectives and targets, whether these need to be re-examined and whether the proposed mitigation measures are being implemented. The monitoring programme will consist of an assessment of the relevant indicators and targets against the data relating to each environmental component.

The environmental report carried out on the Plan in 2008/2009 puts forward proposals for monitoring the implementation of the Plan, and these will continue to apply to the variation that was made to the Plan.

Indicators and Targets

Monitoring is based around the indicators which were chosen earlier in the SEA process as set out in the SEA Environmental Report for the purpose of measuring changes to the various environmental components. They allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives used in the evaluation process. Focus will be given to indicators which are relevant to the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan as varied and existing monitoring arrangements will be used in order to monitor the selected indicators. Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by targets which are derived from the relevant legislation.

Sources

Measurements for indicators should come from existing monitoring sources and no new monitoring should be required to take place. Existing monitoring sources exist for each of the indicators and include those maintained by Mayo County Council and the relevant authorities e.g. the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Central Statistics Office.

The Development Management Process in Mayo County Council and Westport Town Council will provide passive monitoring of various indicators and targets on an application-by-application basis. Where significant adverse effects are likely to occur upon, for example, entries to the RMP, entries to the RPS or ecological networks as a result of the undertaking of individual renewable energy projects or multiple individual renewable energy projects, such instances should be identified and recorded and should feed into the monitoring evaluation.

Reporting and Monitoring

Westport Town Council will be responsible for collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of a monitoring report and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action. It is recommended that a multi-disciplinary committee of suitably qualified persons (Monitoring Committee) be established within two months of the making of this variation to oversee the monitoring process, determine the frequency of monitoring and input into the preparation of the Monitoring Report. It is recommended also that the monitoring reporting should go parallel with the review of the Plan with a Monitoring Report at least every two years or more frequently if determined by the Monitoring Committee.

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for the West Region

July 2012