

City Development Plan Variation No. 7 Marina Park - Pairc Ui Chaoimh

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report

25th November 2011



Cork City Council
Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí

Proposed Variation No. 7 (Marina Park - Pairc Ui Chaoimh) to the City Development Plan

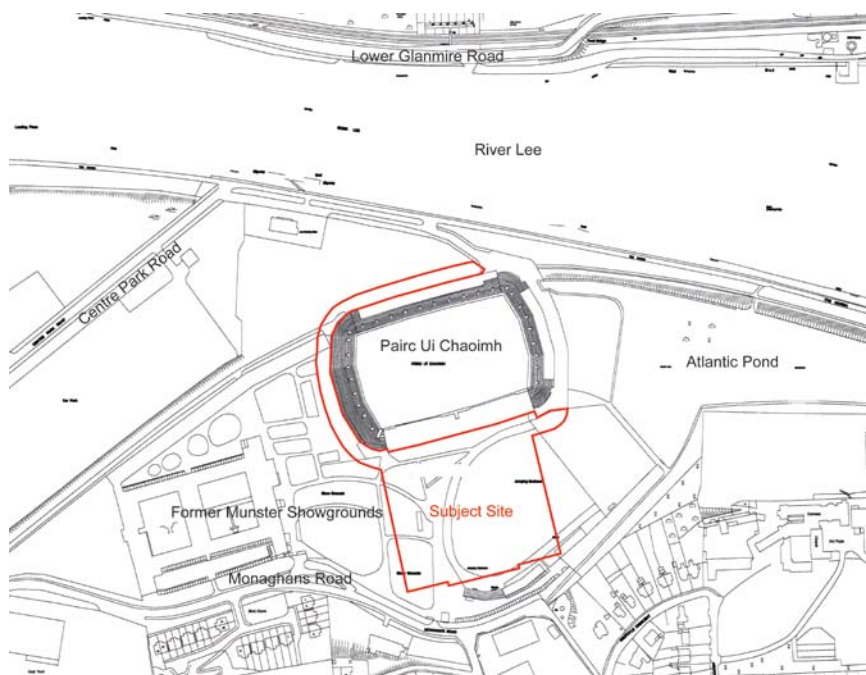
Introduction

The purpose of carrying out this screening statement is to consider whether the proposed Variation no. 7 of the Cork City Development Plan 2009 - 2015 requires a Strategic Environment Assessment under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004.

Section 13(K)(1) of the Regulations states that “*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*”.

Where a planning authority considers that there are significant effects on the environment and that there is a prima facie case for SEA, it should proceed to the scoping stage of the SEA. If the planning authority is uncertain as to the need for SEA the designated environmental authorities as set out in section 13A (4) of the Regulations should be formally consulted during the screening process.

Figure 1 Site Location Map



Proposed Variation

Cork City Council proposes to make a variation to the Cork City Development Plan 2009 - 2015 under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2010. The proposed variation relates to a material change in the Cork City Development Plan 2009 - 2015, as follows:

To rezone 6.82 acres of land currently zoned 'Public Open Space' to 'Sports Grounds' on the site of the former Munster Showgrounds, and consequent changes to text.

Background to Variation

The City Council proposes to facilitate the upgrading of Pairc Ui Chaoimh, (increasing the capacity from 43,000 persons to 50,000 persons) and the development of a 'Centre of Excellence' including an all-weather playing pitch and 1,000 seat spectator stand. City Council Members at the Ordinary Council Meeting of 10/10/2011 voted in favour to dispose of the said 6.82 acres to An Coiste Chontae Chorcai, Cumann Luth-Chleas Gael.

The land is currently zoned 'Public Open Space' with the objective to develop the land as part of the Marina Park. A change of zoning of the subject site to 'Sports Grounds' is proposed to facilitate the development as proposed by Cumann Luth-Chleas Gael.

Figure 2. Existing City Centre & Docklands Zoning Objectives Map 1, (CDP 2009 - 2015)



Figure 3 Proposed City Centre & Docklands Zoning Objectives Map 1, (CDP 2009 - 2015)



Screening Report

This section assesses the likelihood of significant effects to the environment as a result of implementing the proposed variation to the Cork City Development Plan 2009 - 2015 taking account of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004.

Schedule 2A Screening Assessment

The proposed variation has been screened under the following criteria set out under Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to	
(a)	<p>The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,</p> <p>The proposed variation to the Cork City Council Development Plan 2009 - 2015 does not set a framework for projects and other activities, but facilitates the upgrading of Pairc Ui Chaoimh and the development of an all-weather playing pitch that conforms to the new zoning objective.</p>
(b)	<p>The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,</p> <p>The City Development Plan sets out the context and framework for the South Docks Local Area Plan. The objectives of the local area plan must be consistent with that of the development plan.</p>

	<p>The proposed variation does not propose any changes which conflict with the National Spatial Strategy, Cork Area Strategic Plan and the Regional Planning Guidelines.</p>
(c)	<p>The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,</p> <p>The proposed variation is being prepared under the Planning & Development Acts, in the context of a range of EU, national, regional plans, such as the Cork Area Strategic Plan which have been prepared on the basis of promoting proper planning and sustainable development.</p>
(d)	<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan,</p> <p>There are no strategically significant environmental problems identified in relation to the plan. The overall strategy for the City (through the City Development Plan) and the South Docks (through the South Docks Local Area Plan) has already been considered under the SEA process. A brief overview of environmental issues pertaining to the plan area is detailed below.</p> <p>Water Supply The River Lee (Lee Road Waterworks) is the main source of water for the City and the subject lands, but the area is also served by the City & Harbour Water Supply Scheme operated by Cork County Council. The Cork City water supply is currently microbiological and chemical compliant. However, the Lee Road Waterworks is on the EPA's Remedial Action List to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations. The existing system can accommodate adequate supply for the short term but is inadequate for the higher levels of development (city wide) envisaged in the medium to long term.</p> <p>The Lee Road Waterworks Improvement Scheme is scheduled to be operational in 2014. It will provide for large-scale improvements and upgrading of the Waterworks with a view to ensuring that the quality of drinking water continues to be in full compliance with the E.U. Drinking Water Directive and that the Plant meets all Environmental requirements.</p> <p>There is sufficient capacity in the existing network (and through the improvement scheme) to cater for increased water demand envisaged in the Local Area Plan. The proposed variation / upgrade of Pairc Ui Chaoimh is not likely to result in significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Foul Sewer Drainage The Cork Main Drainage Scheme, operating since 2004, has improved the treatment of the City's wastewater effluent in excess of EU Wastewater Directive requirements. There is sufficient capacity in the existing network (through the necessary local upgrades and extensions to the existing network) to cater for the increased foul drainage demand / load envisaged in the Local Area Plan. The proposed variation is not likely to result in significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Surface Water Drainage The existing storm water system consists of pipes, culverts and open channels and the Atlantic Pond. The system forms two distinct catchments with respective discharges to river via flap valves. The Atlantic Pond, the open channels and the culverts store the runoff during high tide, discharging at low tide. There are a number of deficiencies in the infrastructure, including a very shallow gradient causing blockages, ad-hoc modifications causing bottlenecks, blockages through saltation and vegetation; and the Atlantic Pond cannot accommodate the increased runoff from a fully developed South Docks.</p> <p>The South Docks LAP has set out a strategy of 5 sub-catchment areas, whereby sub-catchments will discharge directly into the Lee with local storm water storage as required using SUDS or tanks to cater for unusually high, high tides; or will drain into the Atlantic Pond, (from the vicinity of Paric Ui Chaoimh and the Showground lands).</p> <p>In severe events, excess surface water will drain to the Atlantic Pond, which will be amended to accommodate additional dry storage in Marina Park. This area extends over the variation / rezoning lands at the former showgrounds. The exact size of any extended Atlantic Pond requires further design development in order to establish more precise storage requirements.</p>

	<p>Surface water shall be managed in accordance with appropriate attenuation measures such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) including 'porous' hardstanding materials. The proposed development of a 'floodable' all-weather playing pitch as an integral part of an extended Atlantic Pond / additional dry storage as outlined in the South Docks Local Area Plan's Infrastructure Strategy is not likely to result in significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Ground Water Vulnerability Ground water is not a source of drinking water. The study area is categorised as being 'high' in terms of its ground water vulnerability, (Geological Survey of Ireland) i.e. the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter underground water. This may require specific drainage design measures to prevent surface activity from polluting the underlying groundwater.</p> <p>The development site is considered to be a 'brownfield' site and consists of 'made' ground, a result of prior reclamation and construction. The existing surface water and sewerage infrastructure is considered to be adequate to facilitate a limited amount of the early phases of development envisaged by the South Docks Local Area Plan, and mitigates the potential risk to groundwater. Furthermore, it is Council policy to continue to upgrade and develop the drainage system in order to facilitate predicted population and economic growth; and to protect the City's groundwater resource as a future potable water supply.</p> <p>Flooding Cork City is very vulnerable to adverse effects from small changes in sea level and flooding of the River Lee and a number of small streams. The River Lee catchment-based flood risk assessment and management study, (LeeCFRAMS) classifies the subject lands as Flood Zone A, having a high probability of flooding, i.e. tidal and/or river flooding. Water compatible development such as public open space or sports /recreational facilities (i.e. an all-weather pitch) is considered appropriate in this zone. It is considered that the proposed variation or rezoning of public open space to sports ground will not have significant effects on flooding in the area, provided it is designed to be floodable and is at or close to existing grade levels.</p> <p>Population The South Docks Local Area Plan relates to a total of 131 hectares or 324 acres and anticipates a population of 20,000 (or 8,700 households) and a workforce of 25,000 persons by year 2027. The proposed variation relating to 6.38 acres does not lead to an increase in population or workforce but facilitates an increase in stadium capacity from 43,000 to 50,000.</p> <p>Cultural / Built Heritage There are no Recorded Monuments or Protected Structures within the plan area, and as such no significant impact on cultural heritage.</p> <p>Areas of High Landscape Value The southern bank of the River Lee and the Atlantic Pond is designated an Area of High Landscape Value, due to its special intrinsic landscape character. The proposed variation does not impact on the character of the AHLV.</p>
(e)	<p>The relevance of the plan for implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection).</p> <p>The proposed variation is considered under the overarching policies of the Cork City Development Plan which includes policies relating to water supply, water quality, foul and surface water drainage, surface water quality, ground water and waste management, in compliance with EU legislation such as the Water Framework Directive and Groundwater Directive. The variation will have no effect on the implementation of the European Union legislation.</p>
2. The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected having regard, in particular, to	
(a)	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

	<p>The proposed variation must accord with the Cork City Development Plan and its environmental protection policies as well as the availability of adequate infrastructure to service new development. Surface water shall be managed in accordance with appropriate attenuation measures such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), in order to mitigate potential flooding/stormwater issues.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed variation will not have significant environmental effects. However, this SEA screening report does not purport to fully address all local effects, as potential impacts on the local environment will be addressed in the Planning Application process.</p>
(b)	<p>The cumulative nature of effects,</p> <p>It is not anticipated that the proposed variation will experience any unacceptable cumulative environmental effects.</p>
(c)	<p>The trans-boundary nature of the effects,</p> <p>The proposed variation will have no trans-boundary effects.</p>
(d)	<p>The risks to human health of the environment (e.g. due to accidents),</p> <p>The aim of the proposed variation is to improve the physical condition of the stadium and ancillary facilities. To improve the environmental quality of the area through good layout and design and consequently improve the experience, health and well being of visitors and participants. It is considered that there will be no risks to human health or the environment.</p>
(e)	<p>The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected),</p> <p>The subject area totals 6.82 acres. The absolute number of persons who will be affected by the plan is indeterminable at this time, but stadium capacity will increase from 43,000 to 50,000. It is considered that there will be no significant environmental effects.</p>
(f)	<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, The subject area is characterised as 'Urban Sylvan' (or Urban Wooded) (Landscape Character Assessment, Mosart 2003). This is 'brownfield' land as it is the former site of the Munster Agricultural Showgrounds. There are no pits, quarries or landfills within the subject area. There is no built heritage or archaeological protected or conservation designations within the subject area, nor any natural heritage or biodiversity protection areas.</p> <p>(ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, Environmental policies and objectives contained within the South Docks Local Area Plan and over-riding City Development Plan will ensure that the impact of the proposed development on existing habitats, species and the value of the existing landscape are kept to a minimum. The proposed variation will not detrimentally impact on environmental quality standards or limit values.</p> <p>(iii) Intensive land-use. The subject site lies within the existing built form of the City. The proposed increase in footprint and capacity of the stadium nor the proposed all-weather playing pitch, do not constitute significant intensification of land-use.</p>
(g)	<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised National, European Union or International protection status.</p> <p>The proposed variation lands is not subject of any recognised National, European Union or International protection status and is unlikely to have any effect on any such designated areas</p>

	or landscapes.
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Conclusion

It is considered that the likely impact of the proposed variation in terms of the environment will be **neutral** from a strategic perspective.

Therefore, there is no need for an SEA in this instance as the proposed variation is unlikely to result in development which would have significant negative effects on the environment. It is recommended the City Council does not proceed to SEA scoping in this case.

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