

# **Environmental Statement for Adopted Amendment to Skibbereen Electoral Area Local Area Plan: Darrara Rural Model Village**

## ***Background***

On the 22nd of May 2006, the members of Cork County Council adopted an Amendment to the Skibbereen Electoral Area Local Area Plan to include Darrara Rural Model Village. The amendment of the Local Area Plan is to facilitate the incorporation of the Darrara Rural Model Village into the plan and to introduce a broad based zoning plan and specific objectives to guide the future development of the proposed settlement. The Darrara Rural Model Village is a project initiated by the Government's Affordable Accommodation Initiative and is located on approximately 14 ha lands that have been gifted by the State near Darrara Agricultural College, approximately 5km east of Clonakilty.

Owing to the possibility that significant environmental impact might arise from this amendment and following a scoping exercise carried out in consultation with the EPA 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 from the 20<sup>th</sup> of February to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2006 and during this period of public consultation, the public and interested parties were invited to submit comments and observations.

## ***The Environmental Statement***

This statement is prepared under the requirement of Section 14 I of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004, which states that when a planning authority makes or amends a Local Area Plan, an Environmental Statement must be prepared showing how the environmental consideration from the Environmental Report were taken into consideration in the Local Area Plan. The Regulations recommend a format of the strategic environmental statement as follows:-

- 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 of the bio-diversity/flora and fauna, population and human health, soil / water, air quality and climatic factors, material assets and cultural heritage , and a landscape assessment of the site. This identified the principle environmental effects and their significance.
- b) How the submissions/consultation were taken into account** -The submissions received (6) were summarised in the Managers Report to Members in April 2006 and a number of issues raised. The issues identified a number of environmental considerations, which were raised in the Environmental Report. No modifications were made to the amendment, as many of the issues raised in submissions would be taken into consideration during the detailed planning stage (Part 8 planning application)
- c) Reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered.**- The Environmental Report Identified a number of environmental consideration that would be affected by the proposed development, especially in regard to population and human health; soil/water; bio-diversity and material assets. Most of the anticipated effects were of local significance and could be mitigated against by dealing with them under the planning application process. The plan adopted was the original plan as published without modifications.

- d) Monitoring measures** – The mitigation measures introduced a need for a Traffic Management and Integrated Wastewater Plan; protection of existing windbreaks; introduction of a surface water management plan and the continued conservation of the Lios-na-gCon ringfort and Church/cemetery. The monitoring measures put in place include measuring the reduction of woodland, the increase in traffic accidents, soil and water contamination, levels of noise and air pollution and testing any major changes to the amenity value of the natural assets (Lios-na-gCon, church, cemetery, etc).

It is clear from the assessment of the strategic objectives and policies of the amendment to the Local Area Plan for Skibbereen, that the Darrara Rural Model Village project has a strong sustainable thrust. Almost all objectives and policies were found to be either compatible or not in conflict with the sustainability criteria devised for the assessment exercise. There were very few conflicting objectives save for the possible loss of bio-diversity and landscape if the project was implemented and the potential increase in pollution (water, soil and noise) as a result of the increase in development in the area.

The mitigation measures put in place are minimal and the monitoring process established a number of indicators to measure progress on the environment. If development takes place according to that envisaged in the amendment, it is considered possible that the project will be implemented with little or no major significant strategic environmental effects and may result in a rural model village that provides for energy efficiency, good waste management practice and sound environmental conservation in a small rural community.