



NI Strategic Planning Policy Statement Strategic Environmental Assessment Post Adoption Statement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Legislative Context

- 1.1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed plans or programmes to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision making, with a view to promoting sustainable development. The process of SEA was introduced under European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the SEA Directive), and came into force in 2001.
- 1.1.2 The requirements of the SEA Directive are transposed into Northern Irish domestic law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (SR 280/2004).
- 1.1.3 The Department of Environment (DOE) has prepared a Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland (NI) to re-format and reconfigure existing policy provisions so that central government policies are more proportionate and appropriate to the new two-tier planning system. However, additional provisions including policy updates, revisions, and revocations have also been made where appropriate.
- 1.1.4 The SEA Directive requires DOE, as the programming authority, to assess the likely significant effects of its plan or programme on the environment. DOE has instructed ADAS UK Ltd to carry out this process which consists of four main components.
- i. The preparation of an Environmental Report (ER), where the likely significant effects of the SPPS are identified and assessed. The ER is the principal document in the SEA process and summarises the likely effects of the SPPS on the environment, and measures which would mitigate any significant adverse effects.
 - ii. A consultation on the ER and draft SPPS with the public, statutory environmental bodies, and any other EU Member State which might be affected.
 - iii. The consideration of the findings of the ER and the consultation process in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft SPPS.
 - iv. The publishing of the decision to adopt the SPPS and how the SEA process influenced the final outcome.
- 1.1.5 The SPPS was approved by the NI Government's Executive Committee on 22 September 2015 and published on 28 September 2015. As such, in accordance with regulation SR 280/2004, DOE is required to prepare a statement providing information on this decision (the Post Adoption Statement).

1.2 Summary of the SEA Process

1.2.1 The SEA followed an approach set out in Table 1.1 below which is based on the guidance produced by the four UK Governments in 2005¹.

Table 1.1: Stages in the SEA Process

| Stage | Tasks |
|--|---|
| Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope | A1: Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives |
| | A2: Collecting baseline information |
| | A3: Identifying environmental problems |
| | A4: Developing SEA objectives |
| | A5: Consulting on the scope of SEA |
| Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects | B1: Testing the plan or programme objectives against the SEA objectives |
| | B2: Developing strategic alternatives |
| | B3: Predicting the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives |
| | B4: Evaluating the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives |
| | B5: Mitigating adverse effects |
| | B6: Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan or programme implementation |
| Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report | C1: Preparing the Environmental Report |
| Stage D: Consulting on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report | D1: Consulting the public and Consultation Bodies on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report |
| | D2: Assessing significant changes |
| | D3: Making decisions and providing information |
| Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan or programme on the environment | E1: Developing aims and methods for monitoring |
| | E2: Responding to adverse effects |

¹ ODPM, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and DOE (2005). A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. ODPM, London.

1.2.2 Interaction between DOE and ADAS UK to prepare the Scoping Report (end of Stage A), the Consultation ER (end of Stage C) and the final ER (end of Stage D) was a highly iterative process. The consultation phases on these documents with statutory environmental authorities (Consultation Bodies), other EU Member States, the public, and other groups (representing business and industry interests, central government interests, environment interests, community interests, and local government interests) were more formal in nature and are described in Section 3 below.

1.3 Purpose of the Post Adoption Statement

1.3.1 The main purpose of the Post Adoption Statement is to document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees, and other submissions received during the consultation stages have been taken into account during the preparation of the SPPS and related monitoring measures.

1.3.2 Upon adoption of the SPPS, the Post Adoption Statement must be sent to the Consultation Bodies, the public, and where relevant other EU Member States in relation to any transboundary consultations. The Post Adoption Statement includes a summary of the following:

- i. How environmental considerations were integrated into the SPPS.
- ii. How submissions and observations made to DOE, consultation outcomes, and the ER were integrated into the SPPS.
- iii. The reasons for choosing the SPPS as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered.
- iv. The measures decided upon to monitor any significant adverse effects, as well as any potential unforeseen adverse effects arising from the implementation of the SPPS.

2 Summary of how environmental considerations were integrated into the SPPS

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Environmental considerations were integrated in the SPPS through the SEA process. As described in Section 1.2 this involved identification of the baseline situation, particularly constraints and sensitivities.

2.2 Environmental Baseline

- 2.2.1 An analysis of baseline information has been carried out to provide an evidence base for current and likely future environmental conditions without the SPPS. Key environmental and sustainability issues for NI have also been identified. This process has been undertaken to identify any potential environmental sensitivities or constraints which need to be taken into consideration in the preparation of the SPPS.
- 2.2.2 Information for this section was obtained from a variety of sources. This included: Government websites such as those of the DOE, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA); Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analyses carried out by the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) for various 2014-2020 EU funded programmes for NI; and other documents as referenced in the ER.
- 2.2.3 The environmental sensitivities were mapped (Appendix D to the ER) and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified for each of eleven sustainability topics. These were fed back to DOE through the Scoping Report and draft ER.
- 2.2.4 The environmental baseline conditions along with responses received during consultation on the Scoping Report and review of other relevant plans and programmes, led to the identification of a number of SEA objectives. These are set out in Section 2.2 of the ER.

2.3 Preparation of the Environmental Report

- 2.3.1 The ER was prepared to carry out an evaluation of the likely environmental effects of the implementation and non-implementation of the SPPS.
- 2.3.2 The SPPS was assessed against the SEA objectives. These objectives were used within high level and detailed assessment matrices to ascertain the magnitude of likely effects, the sensitivity or value of the receiving environment (including people and wildlife) and thus the significance of effects of the SPPS measures.
- 2.3.3 Assessments of alternatives to the SPPS as a whole (and to the new policy on Town Centres and Retailing) have been undertaken, along with an assessment of likely cumulative effects of policies within the SPPS and likely in-combination effects of the SPPS with other plans and programmes.

2.3.4 The results of the assessment are detailed in the ER and these have been fed back to DOE through the report.

2.4 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

2.4.1 Annex I of the SEA Directive requires the ER to set out 'the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme'. The SEA process identified some uncertain effects on the environment of the proposed SPPS being implemented at local level, particularly relating to the impact of economic development on ecology and cultural heritage. However with many of the policies setting out planning provisions to ensure that impacts on the natural and built environment are either avoided or minimised, and with planning authorities being required to consider all SPPS policies in the round when developing their local plans, none of these effects were thought to be significant.

2.4.2 Specific mitigation measures for the SPPS have not been deemed necessary, so long as the restrictions and requirements already included in the document are enforced. This is particularly important given that, as noted in the baseline section, compliance with legislation and standard survey and mitigation procedures has not always been enforced in the past and adverse effects have occurred, including a net loss of urban and rural habitats and neglect of heritage buildings in favour of new build. This lack of enforcement and/or lack of mitigation should not be allowed to continue.

2.4.3 Though not a legal requirement, the SEA also identified potential enhancement measures to maximise the beneficial effects offered by the SPPS. Suggestions for enhancements were made in the draft ER. These suggestions were considered by DOE and the following have been incorporated into the adopted SPPS:

- Making more of the natural and historic environment for sustainable tourism;
- Promoting a modal shift to more sustainable patterns of transport, particularly in town centres;
- Requiring consideration of the well-being and biodiversity benefits of amenity/green space in residential developments and regeneration plans;
- Improving access to the coast to encourage physical activity in a natural environment;
- Emphasising the importance of soil as a carbon store;
- Reducing soil sealing by using permeable materials for all hard landscaped surfaces;
- Emphasising the need to support barriers to inward investment such as a lack of infrastructure and related services;
- Requiring a joined up approach with neighbouring councils in relation to waste management and flooding;

- Referring to the need to protect cultural heritage assets and to re-use existing buildings in preference to new build, within the policies likely to affect these assets;
- Improving planners' understanding of the importance of ecosystem services and green infrastructure for society's needs.

2.4.4 Other suggestions for enhancement that were made in the draft ER have not been incorporated into the SPPS as they were considered by DOE to be beyond the scope of the SPPS at this time. They have nevertheless been set out in Section 8.3 of the ER as measures for possible future consideration.

3 Summary of how submissions, observations, consultations and the Environmental Report were integrated into the SPPS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Consultation has been carried out on the SPPS throughout its preparation. Table 3.1 below summarises the various consultation exercises undertaken.

Table 3.1: Consultation Process Summary

| Date | Consultation Summary |
|-------------------------------|--|
| April/June 2013 | Summits on Principles of a SPPS for NI |
| 30 September – 4 October 2013 | Preliminary Stakeholder Seminars |
| 11 October – 15 November 2013 | SEA Scoping Consultation |
| 4 February – 29 April 2014 | Public Consultation on Draft SPPS and ER |
| 31 March – 4 April 2014 | Follow-up Stakeholder Seminars |

3.1 Summits on Principles of a SPPS for NI

3.1.1 Over the spring and summer of 2013, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) convened two summits with a range of stakeholders, supported by follow-up statements, to explore the concept of a possible SPPS for NI. Points raised that are of particular relevance to the SEA include the following:

- 1 The strength of a single policy document is that cross-cutting themes can be embedded across all policies, which is far more difficult to achieve in separate subject based documents. Themes which lend themselves to this are ‘sustainable development’ and ‘community engagement’. Their principles can be embedded within each policy area, creating a thread which reads across policies.
- 2 Inclusive design and design quality is an area which is currently lacking in prominence in the PPSs, along with landscape character and the important role of green infrastructure.
- 3 Guidance is an essential supporting component of planning policy. Following the completion of the SPPS, it is important that there is a comprehensive review of guidance to support the policy. It should be hosted on a single website and actively managed to keep it current.

3.2 Preliminary Stakeholder Seminars

3.2.1 During the w/c 30 September 2013, DOE embarked on a series of five seminars with stakeholders from groups representing business and industry interests, central government interests, environment interests, community interests, and local government interests. These seminars (which were independently facilitated by the

RTPI) presented an opportunity for early engagement with interested and potentially affected parties prior to the drafting of the SPPS.

3.2.2 ADAS staff attended each of these seminars, presenting the preliminary results of the SEA scoping process and setting out key priorities for the SEA going forward and the next steps in the process. The group of environmental stakeholders was provided with additional detail on SEA Objectives and the proposed high level matrix assessment, and asked for their opinion on the scope of the assessment and what they considered to be the key environmental issues.

3.2.3 The main SEA-related points arising from the seminars are set out below. Meeting notes from the 'Environmental Interests' stakeholder seminar, held on 2 October 2013, are provided in Appendix A to the ER.

- 1 Concern over the implications of economic development being prioritised over environmental and social considerations.
- 2 There is a need to emphasise the importance of marine and coastal areas.
- 3 Concern over a lack of protection from development for NI's important landscapes as AONBs in NI have less protection than AONBs in England/Wales.
- 4 There is a need for special consideration for Conservation Areas in terms of town centres and particularly those with a significant number of historic shop fronts in them (i.e. listed buildings). They should have an additional tier of protection/consideration.

3.3 SEA Scoping Consultation

3.3.1 The SEA Directive requires authorities with environmental responsibilities (hereafter referred to as the Consultation Bodies) to be consulted on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the ER (Article 5(4)). The Directive does not require full consultation with the public or bodies other than the Consultation Bodies until the ER on the programme is finalised.

3.3.2 The Scoping Report was issued to DOE and made available to the Consultation Body, NIEA, on 11 October 2013. Due to the potential for transboundary effects with Ireland the report was also issued to the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG), the Department for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR), and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG).

3.3.3 Responses were received from the NIEA and EPA, as well as from the Northern Ireland Environment Link, Council for Nature Conservation & the Countryside, Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust, RSPB, the National Trust and the Geological Survey of Ireland. Consultation responses on the Scoping Report are reproduced in Appendix B to the ER, along with a comment on how they have been accounted for in the preparation of the ER. A summary of the key points is provided below:

NIEA

- 1 The use of an Ecosystems Approach (including looking at Ecosystem Services) at the next stage of the process is encouraged.

- 2 It is important that the SPPS and SEA do not promote or allow economic growth at the expense of sustainable social and environmental considerations.
- 3 Amendments required to sections of the baseline regarding air quality, noise, climate change, waste, biodiversity, water.

EPA

- 1 A transboundary perspective should be taken for water quality, climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, landscape, biodiversity/flora/fauna. Further collaboration with cross-border Authorities considered re: waste, water, and wastewater.

National Trust

- 1 Concern that 'Economic Growth' will become the over-riding consideration. Instead suggest the inclusion of 'protecting' or 'safeguarding the natural and historic environment' as a principle in its own right.
- 2 In June 2013 UNESCO proposed that UK Governments should "strengthen legal provisions and planning framework to allow the national authorities to ensure their responsibilities for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention".

Northern Ireland Environment Link

- 1 The importance of a high quality natural environment to public health (both physical and mental) should be emphasised.
- 2 The ecosystem approach is encouraged. One of the most valuable services provided by peatland is its carbon sequestration and storage capacity, which should be emphasised.
- 3 A separate section on Coast is recommended, to consider water quality, the bringing ashore of offshore renewable energy, oil exploration and possible exploitation, sea-level change and coastal protection, and tourism-related developments.

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust

- 1 The 'Supportive' and 'Distinctive' World Heritage Site Settings are material planning considerations and could therefore be considered conservation designations.

RSPB

- 1 With regards to the core principles, sustainable development needs to come first.
- 2 The fact the interrelationship between topics has been considered e.g. ecology and health within the Green Infrastructure and Ecosystems Services topic, is welcomed.
- 3 There is currently a false division of putting the economy against the natural environment. Both can co-exist, it is about getting the right development in the right place at the right time.
- 4 There is also a real disconnect between people and their natural surroundings.

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

- 1 Amendments required to sections of the baseline
- 2 The SPPS does not appear to cover the marine environment.
- 3 Stress should be laid on the importance of a high quality natural environment to public health, both physical and mental. An increase in awareness about Green Infrastructure is also essential.
- 4 Consideration of biodiversity in the wider countryside and the need to deliver the

Biodiversity Duty set out in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011.

3.4 Public Consultation on Draft SPPS and ER

- 3.4.1 The ER and draft SPPS were presented for public and statutory consultation over the period from 4 February to 29 April 2014. The statutory Consultation Bodies were the same as those listed in Section 3.3 above. In line with the SEA Directive and SR 280/2004, comments from these bodies, members of the public, and other stakeholders were duly noted and considered, and if appropriate addressed in the final SPPS document.
- 3.4.2 DOE received a total of 726 responses to the draft SPPS (including 561 petition style representations). Many of these responses contained elements relating to the environment or general sustainability and have contributed to the revision of the SPPS to its current and final form. Of the Consultation Bodies, comments were received from NIEA and EPA. A summary of the most relevant comments to the SEA, and the response taken is set out in Table 3.2 below. The full text for these comments and our responses is available in Appendix H to the ER.

Table 3.2: Statutory Consultation Responses

| Summary of Comment | Summary of Action Taken |
|--|--|
| NIEA | |
| Without the balancing of economic, social and environmental objectives in the planning and management of development, uncertainties and adverse effects may be significant. It is critical that this aspect of the implementation of the SPPS is monitored as effects are dependent on the balanced application of all the policies. | The ER states in Section 6.13 'It must be ensured that the emphasis on balanced decision making (between economic, social and environmental considerations) included in the SPPS is implemented at the local level' and reiterates this in Sections 8.2 and 9.1. The SPPS itself sets out in at para 3.4 that furthering sustainable development means balancing social, economic and environmental objectives. |
| It is suggested that climate change impact on coastal areas (flooding and coastal erosion / evolution) should be taken into consideration. | The subject policy 'Coastal Development' reiterates the RDS requirement to protect coastal areas from coastal squeeze and to help adaptation to climate change. It also states that development will not be permitted in areas of the coast known to be at risk from flooding, coastal erosion, or land instability. This is also referred to in 'Furthering Sustainable Development' and the subject policy 'Flood Risk'. The ER further recommends that councils identify areas where managed realignment may be appropriate, and give greater consideration to the impacts of climate change on the coastal zone. |
| Amendments required to sections of the baseline and monitoring measures suggested. | These were updated where necessary and incorporated into the final ER. |
| Regarding the existence of an Alternative to SPPS that has less adverse effects on the | DOE has taken this endorsement of the enhancement measures on board and has |

| Summary of Comment | Summary of Action Taken |
|---|--|
| environment, NIEA agrees that the inclusion within the SPPS of the enhancement measures would maximise the beneficial environmental effects of the SPPS. | incorporated some of these into the final SPPS, as detailed in this Statement at para 2.4.3. |
| EPA | |
| The EPA notes your determination that transboundary impacts have not been identified. The EPA welcomes that our comments made previously at SEA Scoping Stage have been taken into account. | N/A |
| Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) | |
| The SPPS does not give enough weight to the importance of the development of new market and affordable homes, including the role of new homes in supporting economic development, creating and securing community cohesion and providing a sense of place. The SEA does not address, in any way, the effect of the draft SPPS on meeting the need for affordable housing. | Within 'Furthering Sustainable Development' the SPPS now refers to the importance of facilitating delivery of social and affordable homes in order to meet the needs and aspirations of society, whilst the subject policy 'Housing in Settlements' states that a Housing Needs Assessment / Housing Market Analysis must be taken into consideration to ensure the right mix of housing tenures including affordable housing. The DOE is working with the Department for Social Development (DSD) on the new PPS 22 which will remain separate to the SPPS. |
| RSPB | |
| While the RSPB welcomes the recognition of ecosystem services in the countryside, we are concerned about the adoption of a positive approach to new development in the countryside in the absence of the precautionary principle. | Significantly more detail has been added to the policy 'Development in the Countryside' regarding what is and is not acceptable development in the countryside, which will strengthen the protection of the countryside and reduce adverse effects on visual amenity and landscape character. |
| As land is a finite resource, the planning system should deliver as much development as possible through development plans that are subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), informed by a robust evidence base. | SEA and HRA are a legal requirement at Local Plan level. This has been referred to in SPPS core planning principle 'Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment' and in Sections 6.14 and 8.1 of the ER. |
| The Environment and Planning Law Association of Northern Ireland (EPLANI) | |
| References to the wider benefits to society and the economy provided by the natural environment, in terms of general well-being and specific ecosystem, should be placed at the forefront of natural environment policy as central guiding principles. | The section on 'Furthering Sustainable Development' at the beginning of the SPPS document now requires councils to identify the condition of ecosystems, the provision of services and their relationship to human well-being, and to integrate these into plan-making and decision-taking. There is also a new core planning principle on 'Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment'. |
| Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) | |

| Summary of Comment | Summary of Action Taken |
|---|--|
| The subject policy on waste is very negative in emphasis. The reference to the Precautionary Principle is the only one within the thematic strands of the document and appears to us to not be compatible with the earlier stated presumption in favour of development. | DOE has revised the text to emphasise the positive role that waste management can play in sustainable development, whilst the reference to the Precautionary Principle in this subject policy has been removed. |
| Historic Monuments Council | |
| Insufficient preparation and resources have been given to ensuring that cultural and archaeological heritage will be protected, enhanced and managed in the proposed two-tier planning system. There is no accompanying Departmental Guidance on this issue, whilst there is a lack of any detail on how the new local authorities will be provided with the resources to have expert advice to inform the LDPs and to assess and evaluate the heritage impact of specific planning applications. | The revised SPPS has been greatly improved to ensure that NI's cultural heritage resource will be protected, enhanced and appreciated through the planning system, with references not only within the subject policy 'Archaeology and Built Heritage', but also within 'Furthering Sustainable Development, and several of the core planning policies and other subject planning policies. The ER has stressed that the lack of enforcement and/or lack of mitigation that has affected cultural heritage in the past must not be allowed to continue. The question of resourcing goes beyond the scope of the SEA or the SPPS. |
| Other organisations and private individuals | |
| There is a noticeable absence throughout the SPPS of the terms environmental assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) whilst no reference is made to the appropriate European Union directives. | A paragraph on environmental legislation and the requirement at Local Plan level to undertake environmental assessments has been included in SPPS core planning principle 'Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment'. This is also referred to in Sections 6.14 and 8.1 of the ER. |
| Other comments similar to those mentioned above by other consultees. | N/A |

3.5 Follow-up Stakeholder Seminars

3.5.1 During the consultation period DOE held and contributed to a wide range of meetings and consultation events in order to both explain the content of the draft SPPS to interest groups, and to inform stakeholders considering responding formally to the public consultation. One series of events, which ran from 31 March to 4 April 2014, involved roundtable discussions with a broad range of interests. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) facilitated these roundtable discussions, whilst ADAS presented the findings of the Environmental Report and held question and answer sessions on the environmental and sustainability aspects of the SPPS. Following these events, the RTPI prepared a report on the key themes that emerged. This is available on the SPPS website. The main SEA-related points arising from the seminars are set out below.

Business Interests

- 1 Not enough weight is given to economic considerations given the current state of the economy.

- 2 There is a need to attract investment, especially from international investors, with a focus on the environmental benefits/drivers of inward investment.
- 3 England's NPPF promotes utilities and infrastructure much more than the SPPS.
- 4 Greater weight should be placed on the need for housing needs assessments.

Environmental Interests

- 1 Need for greater clarification of sustainable development. The focus on the economy is still too strong.
- 2 Need technical guidance to support the SPPS.
- 3 Councils should be monitored to check that planning conditions are being complied with.
- 4 'Preserving ecosystem services' should be included as a core planning principle.
- 5 Protection for World Heritage Sites should be strengthened. The 'Archaeology and Built Heritage' policy is out-of-date and should require mitigation and recording of archaeological assets prior to development.
- 6 There is a lack of ambition for shared space and united communities.
- 7 Shoreline Management Plans should be referred to.
- 8 The quality of the land affected should be monitored, as should the cumulative change in the countryside.

Community, Academic and NGO Interests

- 1 Regeneration should be an additional core planning principle.
- 2 Accessibility, transport, shared space, health and education all need greater focus in the SPPS.
- 3 Core planning principles are too aspirational to carry weight.
- 4 Concern over how developments, particularly social and affordable housing, will be delivered.

Local Government Interests

- 1 Town centres are becoming derelict and need addressing.
- 2 Need to maintain confidence of businesses, developers and investors.
- 3 It will be difficult to get a balance between town centre first policy and wider retail issues in Local Development Plans
- 4 Guidance will be important as there is not enough detail or clarity in the SPPS. There are a lot of reference documents that should be looked at and cited in the SPPS.
- 5 There is a risk of disparity and lack of continuity regarding the planning of renewable energy at local level. The SPPS should not give these powers to local authorities when it is a regionally significant issue.
- 6 Waste management should be looked at strategically to avoid the current reactionary approach.

Central Government Interests

- 1 Councils will need to look beyond their own administrative boundaries.
- 2 Need more commitment on social housing and economic considerations.
- 3 There should be flexibility on edge of town development.
- 4 Policies are needed to protect ecosystem services and to prevent development on the best and most versatile agricultural land.

5 Travellers and travellers' accommodation are not mentioned in the SPPS.

3.6 Transboundary Consultations

3.6.1 The potential for transboundary effects was identified in relation to Ireland. As described above, the EPA was consulted as part of the Scoping and Public Consultation stages of the SEA. A response was received and addressed during the Scoping stage (see Section 3.3.3 above) and also during the Public Consultation stage (see Table 3.2 above).

3.7 Post-Consultation Modifications to the Programme

3.7.1 Since completion of the public consultation exercise in April 2014, DOE have undertaken further work on the SPPS. The updated 'Furthering Sustainable Development' objectives, core planning principles and subject policies are detailed in Section 1.3 of the final ER; it is this updated version that was then assessed in the ER. There have been various changes to the text of the policies and principles, and some restructuring to the document as a whole. An outline summary of the main changes is provided below.

Table 3.3: Key changes to the SPPS following Consultation

| Section of SPPS | Changes Made |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Furthering Sustainable Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional detail added to the environment pillar, e.g. inclusion of reference to heritage assets, landscape and seascape, energy and water usage, and flooding. Greater reference to climate change adaptation. Sustainable re-use of historic buildings promoted. New section on 'The Importance of Ecosystem Services' added. |
| Core Planning Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improving Health and Wellbeing</i> – addition of text on better integration between land use planning and transport; and on the need for adequate private, semi-private and public amenity space in all residential development. <i>Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making</i> – now considers how the design of a development can minimise energy, water usage and CO2 emissions; and the impact of development on existing (historic) buildings and landscape character. <i>Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth</i> – new principle requiring a positive approach to appropriate economic development proposals. <i>Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment</i> – new principle stating the important role of planning in conserving, protecting and enhancing the environment, the role of the environment in supporting the economy, and the requirement for plans and proposals to undergo environmental assessment. Previous principles focusing on operational methodology have been removed from this section. |
| Archaeology and Built Heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasises links to quality of life, sense of place, and opportunities for investment and economic and community benefit. World Heritage Site text strengthened, also for archaeology and listed buildings. |
| Coastal Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of text restricting development in flood prone areas or |

| Section of SPPS | Changes Made |
|---|--|
| | <p>those susceptible to erosion/land instability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New presumption in favour of development that promotes the enhancement and regeneration of urban waterfronts. • Existing public accesses and coastal walkways are given protection from new development and should be promoted by LDPs. |
| Control of Outdoor Advertisements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside quality / amenity and archaeology / built heritage should not be adversely affected. |
| Development in the Countryside | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly more detail added regarding what is and is not acceptable development in the countryside. • Sympathetic conversion and re-use of existing locally important buildings encouraged. • Re-introducing from PPS21 the provision for the designation of Special Countryside Areas. • Landscape Character Assessments should be taken into account. • Removal of policy allowing for designation of Dispersed Rural Communities. |
| Economic Development, Industry and Commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity with the (public) transport system should be considered when zoning land. • LDPs to provide guidance in terms of key design, layout and landscaping requirements. |
| Flood Risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) now encouraged for redevelopment/regeneration schemes as well as new build • Tightening up of wording to prevent development in flood plains or where there is a high risk of inundation. • Requirement for development over a certain threshold or in an at-risk location to undergo a Drainage Assessment. • Suggested use of permeable materials to reduce soil sealing. |
| Housing in Settlements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specified link between good quality housing and a safe, healthy and prosperous society. • The use of greenfield land for housing should be reduced in favour of the recycling of land and buildings. • Development should have a high degree of integration with local facilities, jobs, services, infrastructure and public transport. • New section added on Traveller Accommodation, including environmental requirements. |
| Minerals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text improvements regarding the restoration of mineral sites after working has ceased. • Peat extraction must balance the need for the resource against the need to protect and conserve the environment |
| Natural Heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on importance of natural heritage to sense of place; national and community identity; opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and sustainable economic activity; and the health and wellbeing of society. • Recognition that natural heritage delivers ecosystem services. • Appropriate weight should be given to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment. • Account must be taken of landscape character and AONBs. • Mitigation and/or compensatory measures 'will' rather than 'shall' |

| Section of SPPS | Changes Made |
|--|---|
| | <p>be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDPs to consider incorporating biodiversity features and green space into plans for regeneration. |
| Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational activities in the countryside should not negatively impact on the amenity of existing residents. • Councils required to bring forward an Open Space Strategy. • Presumption against the loss of open space is irrespective of its physical condition and appearance. • Zoning for future needs must provide adequate green and blue infrastructure, and take account of the importance of green space for sense of place and providing ecological networks. |
| Renewable Energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of terrestrial and marine environments working together. • Appropriate weight will be given to the wider environmental, economic and social benefits of renewable energy projects. • Councils to consider access arrangements, road safety, good design, noise and shadow flicker, separation distance, cumulative impact and communications interference. |
| Telecommunications and Other Utilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators will be encouraged to site share wherever possible to reduce the number of new masts. |
| Tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specified contribution tourism makes to NI's jobs, infrastructure, viability of local services, and vibrancy of NI's culture and heritage. • Emphasis on the need to carefully manage tourism development in the countryside. • Safeguarding or enhancement of existing or planned public access to the coastline. |
| Town Centres and Retailing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of town centre's contribution to employment, leisure and cultural uses, a sense of community and place stated. • Importance of accessibility and reducing travel demand stated. • Restrictions on development of retail facilities in the countryside. • Assessments of retail impact and need now required for retail or town centre type developments above 1,000 m² gross external area. |
| Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages modal shift from use of the private car to use of public transport, walking and cycling, by means of provision of improved infrastructure and sustainable patterns of development. • Links to improving air quality and the health of society. • Transport Assessments (TA) to be carried out to review the potential transport impacts of development proposals. |
| Waste Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of sustainable waste management to health and wellbeing of society, and provision of jobs and investment stated. • Reference to precautionary principle removed, and instead proximity principle is highlighted. • Locational criteria to be met for proposals for new waste facilities. • Regional scale facilities must be located close to and benefit from easy access to key transport corridors, particularly rail and water. • Consider impact on visual amenity, nature conservation, archaeological/built heritage, flood risk and agricultural land. |

4 Consideration of Alternatives

4.1 The Alternatives Considered

4.1.1 Consideration of alternatives is a key feature of the SEA process. The SEA Directive requires that the ER should consider:

‘Reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme’ and give ‘an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’ (Article 5.1 and Annex I (h)).

4.1.2 In practical terms, it refers to possible alternative ways of delivering the SPPS, and the assessment of the impacts of each of these options against the SEA Objectives.

4.1.3 In order to provide for assessment of policy options it was agreed that the approach should be twofold in that: there is an assessment of alternatives overall, i.e. strategic level options for the approach to and content of the SPPS as a whole; and an assessment of different delivery mechanisms for the new policy on Town Centres and Retailing.

4.1.4 The SEA has focused only on the reasonable alternatives that have emerged during the drafting of the SPPS. Section 4.3 of the ER describes the ‘strategic’ alternatives, and Section 4.4 explains what the preferred Alternative was and why DOE chose to take this forward to public consultation.

4.1.5 It should be noted that it was not considered necessary to undertake an assessment of alternatives for each draft amendment in the development of the SPPS. However, where appropriate there have been some improvements to the subject policies. These improvements have been made taking into account comments received as a result of the consultation process. They do not materially alter the strategic thrust of the SPPS policies which remain the same. However, alternatives were assessed for Town Centres and Retailing policy, and are set out separately in Section 7.2 of the ER.

4.2 Outline Summary of Alternatives Considered

4.2.1 Table 4.1 below summarises the contents of the three alternative options that were considered in the SEA process for the SPPS as a whole. Table 4.2 summarises the three alternatives considered for the Town Centres and Retailing policy.

Table 4.1: Outline Summary of Strategic Alternatives Considered

| Alternative | Notes |
|--|---|
| Alternative 1 – Retain existing policy framework | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPS 1: General Principles (1998) • PPS 2: Natural Heritage (2013) • PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking (2005/06) • PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development (2010/11) • PPS 5: Retailing and Town Centres (1996) • PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and The Built Heritage (1999) • PPS 6 (Addendum): Areas of Townscape Character (2005) • PPS 7: Quality Residential Environments (2001/08/10) | <p>This possible alternative assumes that the current policies as set out within the various PPSs remain unchanged.</p> <p>The existing suite of PPSs have been developed</p> |

| Alternative | Notes |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (2004) • PPS 9: The Enforcement of Planning Control (2000) • PPS 10: Telecommunications (2002) • PPS 11: Planning and Waste Management (2002) • PPS 12: Housing in Settlements (2005) • PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use (2005) • PPS 15: Planning and Flood Risk (2013, draft) • PPS 16: Tourism (2013) • PPS 17: Control of Outdoor Advertisements (2006) • PPS 18: Renewable Energy (2009) • PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside (2010) • PPS 23: Enabling Development (2013, draft) • PSRNI: A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (1993) | <p>over a period of time and are underpinned by an extensive body of Planning Appeal Commission judgements and judgements of the Courts. However a number of these contain inaccuracies due to the passage of time since their publication, with PPS 1 and PPS 5 in particular considered no longer fit for purpose.</p> |
| Alternative 2 – Reconfigure and consolidate policies | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP-1: Furthering Sustainable Development • CPP-2: Improving Health and Well-being • CPP-3: Creating and Enhancing Shared Spaces • CPP-4: Delivering Spatial Planning • CPP-5: Observing a Plan-led System • CPP-6: Supporting Good Design, Positive Place-making, and Urban and Rural Stewardship • CPP-7: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement and Front-loading • CPP-8: Enhancing Local Democratic Accountability • PP-1: Archaeology and Built Heritage • PP-2: Coastal Development • PP-3: Control of Outdoor Advertisements • PP-4: Development in the Countryside • PP-5: Economic Development, Industry and Commerce • PP-6: Flood Risk • PP-7: Housing in Settlements • PP-8: Minerals • PP-9: Natural Heritage • PP-10: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation • PP-11: Renewable Energy • PP-12: Telecommunications, Public Services and Utilities • PP-13: Tourism • PP-14: Town Centres and Retailing • PP-15: Transportation and Land Use • PP-16: Waste Management | <p>This alternative is the one that DOE published for public consultation in February 2014. It is largely a consolidation of the existing PPS policies into one, more concise document, with some new or updated elements.</p> <p>The Core Planning Principles are a new set of overarching principles to underpin the delivery of the planning reforms set out in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the implementation of the new two tier planning system.</p> |
| Alternative 3 – Fundamental review | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Development – applying the polluter pays principle and the proximity principle; taking account of the full range of costs and benefits over the lifetime of a development. • Shared Spaces – create a rights of way network. • Spatial Planning – targeted investment in connectivity; a more even spread of economic activity to relieve pressures in high growth areas; joint working between local planning authorities. | <p>This alternative option assumes that planning policies in NI, where possible, are adapted to follow an ecosystems approach, based on “the integrated management</p> |

| Alternative | Notes |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, Place-making and Stewardship – include incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments. • Archaeology and Built Heritage – recognition of the historic environment’s contribution to economic vitality, culture, civic pride, quality of life, education, leisure and tourism. • Coastal Development – promote public access to and along the coast; identify areas where managed realignment of the coast may be appropriate. • Outdoor Advertisements – consider scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features. • Development in the Countryside – promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages. • Economic Development – address potential barriers to investment; support infrastructure delivery and innovation to support the transition to a low carbon economy. • Flood Risk – the area of impermeable surface should be kept to a minimum in all new developments; natural features and characteristics of catchments should be restored so as to slow, reduce or otherwise manage flood waters. • Housing in Settlements – promote development that maximises energy efficiency, is easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, with useable open space and regard for biodiversity and flood risk. • Minerals – take account of the contribution of substitute or secondary and recycled materials and minerals; planning authorities should not identify new sites or extensions to existing sites for peat extraction. • Natural Heritage – planning authorities should support opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the natural heritage; take into account the ecosystems and natural processes in their area; and promote the functions and benefits of soils, particularly as a carbon store. • Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation – authorities should undertake an audit of open space resource, taking account of the quality, community value, accessibility and use; contribution to new open space should be sought from developers. • Renewable Energy – planning authorities should consider cumulative effects; support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy; and ensure all new publicly financed buildings set exemplary standards for energy conservation and renewable energy production. • Transportation – developments should be located and designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and incorporate facilities for charging electric vehicles. • Waste Management – buildings should be designed to provide for waste separation and collection; waste should be managed as close to the point of its generation as possible (proximity | <p>of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way”.</p> <p>Suggestions are based on good practice elements of existing planning policy in Scotland (SPP, 2010 and NPF2, 2009), England (NPPF, 2012) and Wales (PPW, 2012) as well as new draft Scottish planning policy (NPF3 and SPP²).</p> |

² Since the assessment of alternatives was carried out in 2013, the draft Scottish Planning Policy document has since been published in final form, on 23 June 2014.

| Alternative | Notes |
|---|-------|
| principle); movement of waste should be undertaken by rail or water wherever feasible; the planning system should contribute to zero waste targets. | |

Table 4.2: Outline Summary of Alternatives Considered for Town Centres and Retailing Policy

| Alternative | Notes |
|---|---|
| Alternative 1 – Retain PPS 5 | |
| <p>Notable objective: <i>“to focus development, especially retail development, in locations where the proximity of businesses facilitates competition from which all consumers are able to benefit...”</i></p> <p>Approach: <i>“The Department is committed to allowing freedom of choice and flexibility in terms of retail development throughout Northern Ireland and to assist the provision of a wide range of shopping opportunities to which the whole community has access... the Department recognises the value and importance of established shopping areas in town, district and local centres, and is therefore committed to protecting their vitality and viability.”</i></p> | <p>This alternative assumes that DOE will continue with the policy as set out in PPS 5 dated June 1996.</p> <p>This is not realistic going forward as it is the least up-to-date of all the existing PPS documents and contains some content that is no longer relevant or appropriate. Nevertheless the objectives and approach are still useful.</p> |
| Alternative 2 – Town Centre First | |
| <p>Notable objective: <i>“to secure a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses.”</i></p> <p>Approach: <i>“In preparing LDPs councils must undertake an assessment of the need or capacity for retail and other main town centre uses across the plan area... LDPs should also define a network and hierarchy of centres - town, district and local centres, acknowledging the role and function of rural centres... Retailing will be directed to town centres, and the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the countryside must be resisted.”</i></p> | <p>This alternative (SPPS Planning Policy 14) is the one that DOE drafted for public consultation in early 2014. The content of this is based on a research study carried out by consultants GL Hearn Limited during 2013.</p> <p>It sets out a new strategic direction towards securing a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses, reflecting an updated evidential context and the approach now followed in England, Scotland and Wales.</p> |
| Alternative 3 – Greater market choice | |
| <p>Notable objective: <i>“provide planning authorities with more freedom to develop their own retail policies and to make local decisions on whether to support town centre or out-of-town retailing.”</i></p> <p>Approach: <i>“minimise potential environmental effects of out of town developments... All retail, leisure and related developments should be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Plans should encourage the clustering of complementary enterprises in industrial and commercial areas so as to reduce traffic</i></p> | <p>This alternative assumes that the SPPS adopts a non-prescriptive approach to retail development and allows greater freedom for both developers and planning authorities to propose and bring forward sites through the LDP process.</p> <p>Though the GL Hearn report indicated that such an approach would have the benefit of allowing planning authorities to fully reflect local circumstances and</p> |

| Alternative | Notes |
|---|---|
| <i>generation. In rural areas the majority of new development should be located in those settlements which have relatively good accessibility by non-car modes when compared to the rural area as a whole.”</i> | needs, it carries a risk of an inconsistent approach nationally. Going against the town centres first approach also provides limited means for maintaining and developing the health of town centres. |

4.3 Assessment of Alternatives

Strategic Alternatives to the SPPS

- 4.3.1 A high level matrix assessment has been carried out on each of the three alternatives showing how well each of the respective options performs against the SEA Objectives (see Appendix G to the ER). A summary of this assessment, with accompanying text, is provided in Table 4.1 of the ER. To what extent each of the three alternatives deliver or affect ecosystem services is set out in a second high level summary shown in Table 4.2 of the ER.
- 4.3.2 The ‘retain existing policy framework’ option (Alternative 1) performs the least well of the three alternatives, with particular concerns regarding ecology, soil, water, climate, material assets, green infrastructure and ecosystem services. Though Alternative 2 (reconfigure and consolidate policies) is largely a consolidation of the policies contained in Alternative 1, through emphasising important aspects of extant PPSs (simultaneously removing detail on less important aspects) and including new core planning principles and some minor policy updates, the overall effect is more positive. This is particularly the case regarding new content on sustainable development, energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, health and wellbeing, green infrastructure and the marine environment.
- 4.3.3 Alternative 3 (fundamental review) adds to Alternative 2 innovative and particularly environmentally friendly elements from Scottish, English and Welsh national planning documents; it is therefore the preferred option in terms of how well it supports the SEA Objectives. Particular benefits can be seen in relation to soil, water, climate change, health and wellbeing, green infrastructure and socio-economics.
- 4.3.4 In terms of ecosystem services, Alternatives 1 and 2 are very similar, however Alternative 2 is likely to perform slightly better regarding air quality maintenance, climate regulation, erosion control, spiritual/religious/ethical values, social relations, and primary production. Alternative 3 has some additional benefits again, including for food production, quality of freshwater, water regulation and cycling, natural hazard (coastal flood and sea level rise) protection, soil retention and bioremediation, nutrient cycling, and recreation (i.e. rights of way and access to the countryside).

Alternatives to the Town Centres and Retailing Policy

- 4.3.5 Given that replacing the redundant PPS 5 with a new approach to town centres and retailing policy, i.e. ‘town centres first’ was a key purpose of the SPPS (with the policy itself stemming from the evidence base provided by GL Hearn), it was decided that

neither Alternatives 1 nor 3 were appropriate to take forward to further assessment. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of Alternative 3 were highlighted to DOE, specifically regarding the focus on reducing levels of traffic within town centres.

- 4.3.6 Furthermore, a detailed matrix assessment was carried out on Alternative 2 (both before and after the post-consultation changes to the SPPS), revealing its likely environmental effects. The matrix sets out the duration, frequency, permanence and geographic extent of effects (including transboundary effects) which fed into the consideration of magnitude (i.e. the degree of change that the proposed scheme would have on the environment). This was then correlated with the value and vulnerability of the receiving environment, which included consideration of protected status and designations. The significance of effect can be either adverse or beneficial, and has been determined for each sustainability topic. This matrix assessment can be seen in Table 7.1 of the ER.

4.4 Reason for Choice of Preferred Strategy

- 4.4.1 The option DOE chose to take forward to public consultation was Alternative 2, even though Alternative 3 performs better environmentally. This is because the SPPS is intended to focus first on a reconfiguration and consolidation of existing provisions over a fundamental review of planning policy. Its purpose is to provide shorter and simplified policy primarily for the new councils in taking forward plan making and development management decisions under a reformed two-tier planning system. This is similar to the approach adopted by the Scottish Government. However, unlike other jurisdictions who have long established two-tier planning systems, councils in Northern Ireland have not had planning powers for some 40 years. Furthermore, some published development plans are currently dated and generally do not replicate operational policies contained within the existing suite of PPSs. A fundamental review of policy would therefore not be appropriate until the reformed two-tier planning system has had adequate time to bed-down.
- 4.4.2 Alternative 3 has nevertheless fed into recommendations made for enhancing the drafting of the SPPS (see Section 2 of the Post Adoption Statement).

5 Monitoring Measures

5.1 Statutory Requirements

- 5.1.1 Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires DOE, as the Managing Authority, to monitor significant environmental effects of implementing the SPPS. This must be done in such a way as to also identify unforeseen adverse effects and to take appropriate remedial action. Monitoring should commence as soon as the programme is adopted, with annual reporting carried out for the life of the programme. It may be necessary to revise the monitoring programme periodically so that it takes account of new methods and increased understanding of the baseline environment.
- 5.1.2 It is important that any monitoring proposed by the SEA should aim to specifically monitor the impact of the SPPS rather than monitoring trends in the baseline environment that would have occurred regardless of the SPPS. In accordance with the NI SEA Regulations, monitoring should also focus on aspects of the SPPS where environmental impacts are predicted to be significant.
- 5.1.3 However, the SEA did not predict any significant adverse effects of the SPPS being implemented. Any adverse effects that do occur are likely to be negligible or minor only, and will not be known until the 11 new councils publish their local plans or start to assess planning applications based on the SPPS or new local plan policies. As no mitigation was proposed (other than ensuring the restrictions and requirements already included in the document are enforced), residual environmental effects of the SPPS are thus unlikely to be of greater than negligible to minor significance, including cumulative effects.

5.2 Monitoring Measures Proposed through the SEA

- 5.2.1 A range of potential actions that could be considered to monitor the environment were developed during the SEA process and were suggested in Section 9.1 of the ER. Some of these suggested actions would be for DOE to monitor at a strategic level (based on LDPs that come forward for adoption), whilst others would be for the new councils to carry out at a local level (based on planning applications that are submitted). These suggested measures are presented in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Suggested Monitoring Measures

| Strategic Level (DOE) | Local Level (Councils) |
|---|--|
| Weight given to the three environmental pillars by Councils in their LDPs. | Proportion of new build vs. extensions, restoration or re-use of existing buildings. |
| Area of coastal lands identified in LDPs where development is restricted to exceptional circumstances due to natural or built heritage reasons. | Proportion of development taking place on greenfield land, agricultural land, previously developed land and other brownfield land. |
| Area of coastal lands identified in LDPs where development should not be permitted due to risk from flooding, coastal erosion, or land instability. | Proportion of new developments (over a particular no. of hectares) that incorporate public/private open/green space. |

| Strategic Level (DOE) | Local Level (Councils) |
|--|--|
| Area of flood plain identified in LDPs for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. | An indication of the level of multi-functionality of new public/private open/green space in terms of the number of ecosystem services it provides. |
| Area of flood plain identified in LDPs for flood control/ mitigation service. | Proportion of new developments (over a particular no. of hectares) that facilitate access by walking, cycling and/or public transport. |
| Area identified in LDPs where there is a presumption against mineral development due to natural or built heritage reasons. | Proportion of new and re-developments that incorporate sustainable drainage systems and/or permeable paving. |
| Area of natural heritage features identified in LDPs. | Number of planning applications for each type of renewable energy development (all sizes and scales) and the proportion permitted. |
| Area and length of ecological network identified in LDPs. | Number of planning applications for new build or extensions within designated sites (including nature conservation, heritage and landscape designations), Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record sites, and the proportion permitted. |
| Area of new Open Space provisioned for in LDPs for biodiversity. | |
| Area of brownfield sites identified in LDPs as part of an urban ecological network. | |
| Area of peatland identified in LDPs as a carbon store. | |
| Number of Shoreline Management Plans commissioned to inform LDPs. | |

5.3 Monitoring Requirements set out in the SPPS

5.3.1 Due to the beneficial effect that the SPPS is expected to have on the environment and the fact that the SPPS will take effect through Council Development plans, DOE has not set out specific environmental monitoring measures in the SPPS. Instead, a sub-section on 'Implementation, Monitoring and Review' has been included in the section on Local Development Plans which states:

“Councils must keep under review the implementation of their plans and report annually to the Department on whether the objectives in the Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan are being achieved. Additional statutory and administrative monitoring requirements that will be kept under review are set out in the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015, Practice Notes, and the Department’s Planning Performance Management and Reporting Framework... Better monitoring, together with regular reviews of LDPs, will provide more flexibility and enable councils to adapt to changing circumstances.”

5.3.2 By reporting to the Department each year on the extent to which the objectives set out within an adopted LDP) has been met, councils will be able to identify any previously unforeseen adverse environmental effects and undertake appropriate remedial action. This will also enable the Department to monitor the implementation of the SPPS.

5.3.3 In addition, monitoring requirements have been set out in the SPPS in relation to the following socio-economic aspects:

- Economic Development – A system to monitor the take up and loss of land allocated for economic development purposes is required to help identify any shortfalls that may arise or highlight the need to reconsider the proposed use of sites.
- Housing in Settlements – A ‘plan, monitor and manage’ approach is necessary to ensure that, as a minimum, a 5 year supply of land for housing is maintained.
- Town Centres and Retailing – Retail and town centre development and trends should undergo regular monitor and review to ensure the maintenance of an up to date and robust evidence base.

5.3.4 The regulations that DOE refer to in the section on ‘Implementation, Monitoring and Review’ contain more specific monitoring requirements. The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 states in Regulation 25 that:

“(2) The annual monitoring report must specify... (c) the supply of land for economic development purposes in the council’s district, and (d) such other issues as appear to the council to be relevant to the implementation of the local development plan.

(3) Where a policy specified in a local development plan is not being implemented, the annual monitoring report must identify that policy and include a statement of- (a) the reasons why that policy is not being implemented, (b) the steps (if any) that the council intend to take to secure the implementation of it, and (c) whether the council intend to prepare a revision of the local development plan to replace or amend the policy.”

5.3.5 Development Plan Practice Notes have been prepared by DOE. The theme of monitoring and review throughout the Development Plan process is recurrent across a number of the Practice Notes. One of these, on ‘Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment’ encourages councils to base monitoring on indicators described in the environmental baseline, and ideally to use existing monitoring arrangements and information to make the most efficient use of resources. Another Practice Note, on ‘Soundness’, requires councils to set out arrangements for monitoring and implementation of objectives, policies and proposals, e.g. through working groups. Within the ‘Enforcement’ Practice Note, councils are required to develop their own Enforcement Strategies to set out their approach and priority areas in respect of enforcement. Going forward, the Department will keep Practice Notes under review and prepare new or revised Practice Notes to support the operation of the two tier planning system. This includes a proposal to prepare a specific Practice Note to address ‘Monitoring and Review’.

5.3.6 In addition, a new Performance Management Framework for Councils has been prepared by DOE, to be supported by the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015, once made. These identify statutory and administrative indicators to be submitted quarterly by each Council, enabling DOE to identify key trends, including best practice and underperformance issues across the whole of NI.

Finally, the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Department to carry out a review of the implementation of the Act in 2018 and every 5 years thereafter. The review will assess the delivery of the reforms contained within the Act and implementation of the new two tier planning system.