

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

BENNETTSBRIDGE LOCAL AREA PLAN 2008-2014

Preliminary Screening Report for Bennettsbridge Local Area Plan

FOR: KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

BY: KSA





1.0 Introduction

As part of the process of preparing a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Bennettsbridge and having regard to the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No 436 of 2004), KSA on behalf of Kilkenny County Council must consider whether to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the proposed plan. The assessment of this issue is based on the criteria set down in the SEA Guidelines and Annex II of the SEA EU Directive (2001) for determining likely significance of environmental effects.

There has previously been no LAP for Bennettsbridge, this LAP will provide for a new development boundary around the village and a land use zoning framework.

Positioned on the River Nore the village of Bennettsbridge is located c. 9km south of Kilkenny City. It is situated almost mid-way between Kilkenny and Thomastown along the R.700. The towns location within a river valley results in the ground both east and west of the village rising upwards from the River, with the ground north and south of the river forming a flat flood plain. The main street of the village is located on raised ground to the immediate east of the river with remaining buildings being located in a dispersed manner on the west bank. The main Kilkenny to Thomastown road (N9) passes through the centre of the village (see Map 1 – Location Map).

2.0 Purpose of Plan or Programme

The overall goal of this LAP is to grow Bennettsbridge into a safe, attractive and viable village by providing for sustainable expansion and development appropriate to and integrated with the existing village and to further enhance the role of Bennettsbridge as a destination for the arts and crafts and attraction for visitors.

The purpose of this LAP is to set out a strategy for the proper and sustainable development of Bennettsbridge. Given the designation of Bennettsbridge as a 'Small Town/Village' under the recently adopted Kilkenny County Development Plan, the relevant policies that apply to Smaller Towns/Villages are set out in the Development Plan as follows:

PS 10 To strengthen the service centre role of smaller towns and villages.

PS 11 To ensure that new residential development in smaller towns and villages is of a design, layout, character and scale which fits well with the town or village involved and presents a high quality living environment. .

PS 12 To revitalise existing villages through the promotion of development within them (particularly on infill sites, vacant sites and on backlands), in preference to continued ribbon development on the approach roads. This will promote the efficient use of available public infrastructure and services.

Given the above objectives from the County Development Plan which are directly applicable to Bennettsbridge and the current population of the village of approximately 700 persons, it is envisaged that a population horizon of 1,000 persons for Bennettsbridge should be achieved over a longer term, 10-12 year horizon (for the period of this Local Area Plan and beyond). Such an increase in the local population needs to be achieved in conjunction with the provision of an increase in local employment. The growth of Bennettsbridge in line with these targets would achieve, inter alia, the following key policy objectives in line with the Development Plan:



- a strengthening of the service centre role of Bennettsbridge both in terms of the town proper and its immediate hinterland;
- maintaining the vitality and viability of the existing village and in particular ensuring the sustained provision of existing services, such as schools, shops, sports clubs, etc.;
- the avoidance of unsustainable ribbon development in the adjoining countryside by ensuring the designation of appropriate zoned lands adjacent the existing village and thereby an efficient use of existing and planned service infrastructure.

The land use zoning framework which will form part of the Draft LAP will need to translate the population horizon as set out above into the provision of an adequate amount of zoned land in the village which can cater for the anticipated population increase. The designation of future lands will need to be particularly guided by and adhere to objective PS12 of the County Development Plan (as quoted above) by designating lands particularly on infill sites, vacant sites and on backlands. The LAP boundary for Bennettsbridge has been determined by the present village structure, the railway line to the east, the River Nore and the projected future population growth land uses for the village. The area contained within the LAP is approximately 89 hectares.

3.0 Mandatory Requirements

In terms of the regulations it is mandatory to undertake the screening process to determine whether or not to carry out a strategic environmental assessment as set out in Article 14A of the Regulations. An assessment of the proposed LAP in terms of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations is set out below. The guidelines require that an SEA shall be carried out for LAP's for towns with a population of 10,000 or more. The current population of the area is approximately 700 persons and this is expected to grow to just over 1000 persons (projected population increase of 400) during the lifetime of this plan.

Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the criteria for determining likely significance of environmental effects. Assessing the proposed LAP, we must assess the points set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive.

4.0 Assessment in terms of Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular to the following:

- **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;** - The LAP will seek to provide adequately zoned land that will ensure housing needs, limited industrial development, community facilities, and services are accommodated in conjunction with an upgrade of infrastructural constraints that exist for the area.

The gross area of the LAP lands is approximately 89 hectares. The current wastewater treatment facility for Bennettsbridge is at capacity. The existing wastewater treatment plant for the village consists of a septic tank, which discharges directly to the river Nore. The design capacity for this septic tank is 400 persons. A full secondary treatment system has been approved and will be able to cater for a population equivalent (P.E) of 1953 persons. Based on current wastewater treatment constraints related to the LAP lands, there will be significant constraints on the amount of land to be developed until the wastewater treatment facility has been upgraded.



In considering and meeting the needs of the community the LAP will have regard to the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment and will assist in achieving the principles of sustainability.

- **The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy;** - The Bennettsbridge LAP will not influence any other land use plans rather the LAP will be influenced itself by a hierarchy of national (National Spatial Strategy), regional (Regional Planning Guidelines) and local plans (Kilkenny County Development Plan). The LAP will be influenced by the policies and objectives as set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008-2014.
- **The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;** - The Bennettsbridge LAP will be made pursuant to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 Sections 18-20. As such the plan will seek to achieve development in a sustainable manner, through the protection and enhancement of its natural, architectural and archaeological heritage.
- **Environmental problems of relevance to the plan;** - The LAP area is located within the south eastern Nore water region (HA15). The river Nore runs to the west of Bennettsbridge. The river Nore is categorised as an RPA nutrient sensitive river. The river has a water quality rating of 3-4 which is defined as being of moderate status. Under the Water Framework Directive the Nore River is defined as being at risk of not achieving good status. Policies and objectives need to be outlined in the LAP to ensure the future protection of the River Nore from any future development in Bennettsbridge. The groundwater sources for Bennettsbridge are categorised as possibly at risk of not achieving good status. Groundwater protection will be of significance in the production of an LAP for the lands. At present the wastewater treatment facility is at capacity and the LAP will need to ensure that policies and objectives are put in place to ensure that the approved wastewater treatment plant is of an adequate standard to cater for any increase of supply. All new developments will be required to use the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Bennettsbridge is currently served from the Bennettsbridge Water Supply Scheme which is primarily a rural water scheme, serving the area between Kilkenny City to the north and Thomastown to the south. The LAP lands are served from this water supply scheme. A preliminary water audit for the Bennettsbridge Rural Water Service Scheme (RWSS) illustrates that the scheme has a high percentage of Unaccounted for Water (UFW) a figure which exceeds international standards.

There are no IPCC licensed facilities or licensed waste facilities in the LAP area and there is no air quality data available for the LAP lands.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) for Co. Kilkenny identifies two sites within Bennettsbridge. These include site KK024-10601 which is centered on the bridge and is classified as "bridge site possible". This refers to a bridge predating the present bridge which spans the Nore at this point. Sites KK024-03401/KK024-03402 are located to the east of the village and are classed as an "enclosure site". Site KK024-032 is located to the south west of the site and is classed as an "enclosure site". Site KK024-033 is located on the site of Mosse Mill and is classed as a building. Site KK024-031001 & 002 a Church and Graveyard are located to the north of the village.



RMP Number	Townland	Classification
KK024-031001	Bennettsbridge	Church
KK024-031002	Bennettsbridge	Graveyard
KK024-032	Bennettsbridge	Enclosure
KK024-033	Bennettsbridge	Building
KK024-03401	Bennettsbridge	Enclosure site
KK024-03402	Bennettsbridge	Enclosure Site
KK024-010601	Bennettsbridge	Bridge site possible

Bennettsbridge has four protected structures recorded in the current Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008-2014, listed under appendix G. The Mosse Mill located on the right bank downstream of the bridge is listed as a protected structure C19 in the County Development Plan. It is also included in NIAH for County Kilkenny under reference number 12312011. Kells mill located on the left bank of the river is listed under RPS number D113 and recorded in the NIAH as 12312007. The bridge at Bennettsbridge is listed under RPS number C18 and contained in the NIAH survey of the village as 12312010. The Garda station has also been included in the RPS under reference number C21 and in the NIAH survey as 12312006. It will be necessary to protect the archaeological value and setting of the sites and monuments of importance through the exercise of development management powers.

The River Nore runs through the centre of Bennettsbridge. The River Nore and River Barrow are a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – site code 002162 – selected for alluvial wet woodlands and petrifying springs, priority habitats on Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive. Appropriate Assessment screening has been carried out on this LAP in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). This screening has been carried out to assess the effects of the policies and objectives of the LAP on the SAC.

Bennettsbridge is located in the Lowlands Area (Nore Valley) of the Landscape Appraisal of the Kilkenny County Development Plan. The lands in this area are described as being ‘the most extensive lowland area in the county’ where the terrain is ‘generally smooth although undulating in certain areas, with vegetative/wooded slopes rising from the river valley’. The generally flat topography allows long distance and extensive visibility. The slopes of the river valley conform to the general river valley pattern. Natural vegetation generally occurs on the floodplain slopes and riverbanks.

Policies and objectives to be set out in the proposed LAP will ensure that impacts on the landscape character of the area are kept to a minimum.

- **The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment;** - Issues relating to EU legislation on the Environment have been addressed by the County Development Plan 2008-2014. The Bennettsbridge LAP will be produced in line with the policies and objectives as set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan.



2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- **The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;** - The proposed Bennettsbridge LAP will see a change in land use for sections of the 89 hectares. The main environmental effects of the proposed LAP will be with regard to:
 - Increase in waste generation – waste issues will be addressed in the plan and policies and objectives regarding recycling will be made.
 - Greater water supply demand – the LAP will ensure that sufficient water supply will be made available to meet the needs of the LAP area.
 - Wastewater collection and treatment – the existing wastewater treatment plant in the town will have to be upgraded before implementation of the proposals from the LAP. It will be a policy of the LAP to ensure that any future development within the LAP lands coincides with the extension of the public sewage network during the lifetime of the LAP. Approval has been granted to upgrade the existing wastewater treatment plant, which consists of a septic tank and has a design capacity for 400 persons, to a full secondary wastewater treatment process capable of treating from a population equivalent to 2000 persons.
 - Loss of localised biodiversity due to loss of agricultural land and existing trees and hedgerows – Policies and Objectives from the LAP will ensure that local biodiversity loss will be as minimal as possible. Development management should ensure that existing trees and hedgerows are retained wherever possible.
 - Increase in traffic generation – Policies and objectives in the LAP will ensure that traffic problems or potential problems are alleviated through proper design recommendations.

Policies and objectives outlined in the LAP will seek to mitigate and reduce any adverse impacts resulting from development of the LAP lands.
- **The cumulative nature of effects;** - It is not anticipated that the Bennettsbridge LAP will experience any unacceptable cumulative environmental effects as a result of the policies and objectives contained within the LAP.
- **The transboundary nature of the effects;** - The policies and objectives of the Bennettsbridge LAP will have no national, regional or inter county transboundary effects.
- **The risks to human health or the environment;** - The policies and objectives set out in the Bennettsbridge LAP will seek to reduce any potential impact to human health of the proposed development. There will be limited risks to the environment from the proposals set out in the LAP. The River Nore, a cSAC runs through the centre of the LAP lands and policies and objectives outlined in the LAP will be such to safeguard this SAC from any detrimental environmental affects. Appropriate Assessment screening has also been carried out as part of this LAP process to assess the effects of the policies and objectives of the LAP on the SAC, in line with requirements of Part 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.
- **The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected);** - The LAP covers a geographical area of some 89 hectares. At present Bennettsbridge has a population of approximately 700 people. Based on infrastructural constraints and availability of unzoned land the projected population growth for the area is for an additional 200 people during the lifetime of this plan to 2014 (with an ultimate population horizon of 1000 people by the year 2020).



- **The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:**
 - a). **special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;** - The LAP lands are located within the Nore Valley an area which is perceived as being scenic and special in landscape terms. Policies and objectives outlined in the LAP will ensure that this 'special' natural characteristic is protected from any future development.

The LAP lands have significant Archaeological heritage as outlined above. It is considered appropriate that a policy will be provided within the LAP that will ensure any planning applications that may, due to its location, size and nature, and which may have implications for the archaeological heritage should be subject to archaeological testing and monitoring.
 - b). **exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;** - Environmental policies and objectives to be contained within the LAP 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.
 - c.) **intensive land use;** - The proposed LAP will increase the amount of residential zoned land within Bennettsbridge. As such, it is considered likely that the future developments resulting from the new zoning will intensify land uses within the LAP area to a degree that would not adversely impact upon the existing natural and built environment. Quality design standards and guidelines shall be provided in the LAP with appropriate policies and objectives which will seek to reduce the potentially negative impact of the increased land uses within the area.
- **The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status;** - The River Nore and Barrow are a cSAC – site code 002162. Appropriate Assessment screening will be carried out as part of this LAP process to ascertain if the LAP will have any impacts on this SAC. Policies and objectives outlined in the LAP will ensure the continued environmental protection of these areas.

5.0 Determination in Terms of Article 14A

In terms of the provisions of Article 14A of the Regulations, following the appropriate consultation period the planning authority shall determine whether or not implementation of the LAP would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations and from any submission or observation received from the environmental authorities.

It is considered that the Bennettsbridge LAP as detailed above would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. Policies and objectives outlined in the proposed LAP will ensure that environmental impacts are kept to a minimum. The proposed LAP will follow strict policies and objectives as set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2008-2014. It is considered that the environmental effects of the proposed LAP would be minimal and that they would be more appropriately assessed at development management level through an Environmental Impact Assessment.

In view of the above it is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required in respect of the proposed LAP for Bennettsbridge.



**BENNETTSBRIDGE
CONTEXT MAP**

LEGEND

-  LOCAL AREA PLAN BOUNDARY
-  REGIONAL ROAD
-  THIRD CLASS ROAD
-  RAILWAY
-  RIVER NORE

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2008
SCALE: 1:25,000 @ A4


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SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

LEGEND

 LOCAL AREA PLAN BOUNDARY

 RIVER MORE

 SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

SITE CODE	SITE NAME
2162	River Barrow and River More

DRAFT



DATE: SEPTEMBER 2010
 SCALE: 1:12,500 @ A4
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