

Adopted Variation to the Cork County Development Plan 2009

(adopted by the Members of Cork County Council on 28th
January 2013)

Variation No. 4: Greenways Policy

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Adopted Variation to the County Development Plan 2009

Variation No. 4: Greenways Policy

At a meeting of the Council on 28th January 2013, the Members of the Council agreed to vary the Cork County Development Plan 2009 in order to support the development of greenways, dedicated walking and cycling routes, along the abandoned rail lines in the south and west of the County.

This adopted variation concerns the inclusion of additional text to the Walking and Cycling policy contained in Chapter 5, Volume 1 of the County Development Plan 2009.

The variation supports the development of greenways while also ensuring that development proposals that could compromise the delivery of any of the routes are avoided.

No mapping change is involved in this variation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

In accordance with the requirements of Article 13K of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011, the proposed Variation was screened for any significant environmental effects. No significant effects have been identified and accordingly it was determined that there was no need for an environmental assessment in this instance. A copy of the Screening Report can be viewed online at www.corkcoco.ie. Copies are also available from the Planning Policy Unit, Floor 13, County Hall.

Habitats Directive Assessment

In accordance with the requirements of Part XAB, section 177 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the proposed Variation was screened to determine whether the Variation as proposed could have any negative consequences for the habitats or plant and animal species of any European Site¹. No significant impacts on any such site were identified as part of the screening process, and accordingly it was determined that there was no requirement to complete Appropriate Assessment of the proposed variation. A copy of the Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Statement can be viewed online at www.corkcoco.ie. Copies are also available from the Planning Policy Unit, Floor 13, County Hall.

¹ A European site is any site that has been or is proposed for designation for the protection of habitats and / or species, in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats or the EU Birds Directives.

Adopted Variation

Volume 1 – Chapter 5: Economy and Employment

1.1.1. It was agreed to include additional text (bold and underlined) after paragraph 5.6.14 to read as follows:

“Greenways

Combined off-road cycle and walking routes and recreational trails developed along abandoned rail lines, utility corridors or other natural linear open spaces such as river banks are often referred to as Greenways. County Cork has a large number of abandoned rail lines and while some of these routes are being brought back into use with commuter rail services as part of the Cork Suburban Rail Network Project, there is no immediate prospect that many of these routes will revert to a rail use. They could however, make a highly valuable contribution to the recreation and tourism infrastructure of the county if developed as multi-user recreational trails.

In October 2011, a report was completed on the feasibility of providing ‘greenways’ along the abandoned rail lines of South and West Cork. Nine sections of rail line including routes from Cork to Kinsale, Clonakilty, Skibbereen, Baltimore, Schull and Bantry, totalling 188km, have been identified. The report concludes that no section of the line should be precluded on engineering grounds for the construction of a greenway. A more detailed consideration of the feasibility of the Cork to Kinsale section was subsequently completed and work is progressing on the development of this section as Phase 1 of the larger greenway project.

While it should be possible to provide the majority of the routes on the existing track alignment there may be a need for local diversions and deviations following detailed survey and design work, landowner consultation and having regard to environmental sensitivities. It is an aim that these routes be identified on maps as part of Volume 3 of the County Development Plan, but this can only be achieved when the exact route design and associated statutory planning process has been completed and having fully considered any significant environmental effects of the exact routes. Until this time, adequate protection needs to be given to the abandoned rail lines so as to avoid inappropriate development that could compromise the viability or delivery of the routes.

While the majority of the rail lines run through open countryside, opportunities for providing greenways are not confined to rural locations. Highly successful greenways have already been developed along the old coastal rail line along the western side of Cork Harbour linking Rochestown to Passage West and Carrigaline to Crosshaven. Achieving connectivity between completed sections of the existing trail network with future routes is an important consideration. A further feasibility report has been completed on the potential for a greenway from Passage West to Carrigaline (including a branch to Ringaskiddy) that would link the Rochestown to Passage West and Carrigaline to Crosshaven routes and would thereby provide a continuous dedicated walking and cycling route from Rochestown to Crosshaven and make important links with transport connections at the Carrigaloe cross river ferry (and hence onwards to Cobh) and more significantly, the passenger ferry terminal at Ringaskiddy.

Parts of some of the rail lines are located close to sites that have been designated for the protection of habitats and species, or may pass through other environmentally sensitive areas. Full regard will be had to impacts of the development and use of the Greenways on such sites and areas at the detailed design stage, and appropriate measures will be

integrated into the design and construction of the routes, in order to avoid impacts on habitats or species which could be significant. Measures which may be implemented could potentially include minor rerouting, or the buffering or screening of particularly sensitive areas along the Greenways."

1.1.2. It was agreed to amend Development Plan Objectives for Walking and Cycling to include a new objective ECON 6-6A (bold & underlined) as follows:

"ECON6-6A

Greenways

a) It is an objective to support the development of greenways, dedicated walking and cycling routes, broadly along the route of the abandoned rail lines in the south and west of the county.

b) It is an objective to protect potential greenway routes along, and in proximity to, abandoned rail lines from inappropriate development that could compromise the delivery of a greenway in the future."

