



NI Strategic Planning Policy Statement Strategic Environmental Assessment

Non Technical Summary

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1 What is the Environmental Report and why has it been written?

ADAS has been instructed by the Department of Environment (DOE) to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland (NI).

The process of SEA was introduced under European Directive 2001/42/EC12 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive), and came into force in Northern Ireland through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (SR 280/2004).

The Environmental Report describes the outcome of the SEA. This involves an evaluation of the likely environmental effects of implementation and non-implementation of the SPPS, including an assessment of realistic strategic alternative approaches. The Report also suggests measures to minimise potentially adverse environmental effects of implementing the SPPS, along with enhancement measures that could improve the effect on the environment yet further.

The Environmental Report has been written to accompany the SPPS; a draft version was issued to the statutory consultation bodies for viewing and comment on by other interested organisations and members of the public for a period of twelve weeks from 4 February to 29 April 2014. This Non Technical Summary is a simplified version of the updated Environmental Report.

2 What is the Strategic Planning Policy Statement?

The SPPS has been prepared in the context of wider planning and local government reforms which will see the transfer of the majority of planning functions from DOE to the 11 new local councils on 1 April 2015. The SPPS, when published in final form, will have a key role in the future implementation of these reforms by explaining the core planning principles of the reformed two tier planning system and key concepts such as furthering sustainable development, well-being and place making. The SPPS provides a shorter, more simple and more accessible statement of planning policy for all users of the planning system. It will be used by Planning Authorities to inform the content of development plans, and be a material consideration in decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

The SPPS consolidates existing planning policies, as contained within the current Planning Policy Statements and relevant provisions within A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland. These have been updated and revised as appropriate, whilst existing policy on retailing and town centres has been replaced with new policy. The objective of the planning system which is at the heart of the SPPS is 'Furthering Sustainable Development'; this is supported by five overarching core planning principles and sixteen subject planning policies. These are as follows:

Furthering Sustainable Development:

- FSD-1: Furthering Sustainable Development

- FSD-2: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change
- FSD-3: The Importance of Ecosystem Services

Core Planning Principles:

- CPP-1: Improving Health and Well-being
- CPP-2: Creating and Enhancing Shared Space
- CPP-3: Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth
- CPP-4: Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making
- CPP-5: Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment

Subject Planning Policies:

- SPP-1: Archaeology and Built Heritage
- SPP-2: Coastal Development
- SPP-3: Control of Outdoor Advertisements
- SPP-4: Development in the Countryside
- SPP-5: Economic Development, Industry and Commerce
- SPP-6: Flood Risk
- SPP-7: Housing in Settlements
- SPP-8: Minerals
- SPP-9: Natural Heritage
- SPP-10: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation
- SPP-11: Renewable Energy
- SPP-12: Telecommunications and Other Utilities
- SPP-13: Tourism
- SPP-14: Town Centres and Retailing
- SPP-15: Transportation
- SPP-16: Waste Management

3 What is the current state of the environment in Northern Ireland?

Northern Ireland is a predominantly rural region, with 80% of the landmass in agricultural and forestry use. Almost two fifths of the urban population live within the Belfast Metropolitan Area. The country has distinctive cultural heritage and retains strong rural dimensions through the importance of agriculture, tourism and their interactions with the landscape. Strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified for each of eleven sustainability topics (correct as at February 2014); these are summarised below.

Table 3.1: Northern Ireland's Environmental Baseline

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Ecology and Nature Conservation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large area of land of international and national nature conservation value, e.g. Natura 2000 sites and SSSIs • Good representation of peatland, grassland and hedgerows • Good representation of coastal habitats such as inlets, bays and dunes along with endemic marine species • Integration of Natura 2000 site management with Agri-environment schemes and Habitat and Species Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent loss of urban wildlife habitats in NI • Continued loss and degradation of semi-natural habitat by agricultural conversion and building and intensification • Nitrogen deposition caused by agricultural ammonia emissions are threatening sensitive habitats • Significant proportion of habitats and species in unfavourable condition • Wetland birds and bee species declining fast • Lack of forward-thinking management for protected sites • Intermediate-value habitats less well protected and thus more vulnerable • Increasing trend of problematic pests, diseases and invasive species • Deterioration in marine environment affecting rock and sediments, fish stocks, seabirds and bottom dwelling marine life • Coastal habitats at risk from poor water quality, offshore renewable energy connections, oil exploration, sea-level change, flood defence schemes, and tourism-related developments • Climate affecting biodiversity through changes in species/habitat distributions, migrations, life cycles, food chains/predation, hydrological changes and facilitating invasive species
Socio-Economics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong businesses and communities in rural areas • Good provision of telecommunications but opportunity to improve broadband speed • Opportunity to boost the 'blue economy' through offshore renewable energy and maritime industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of UK's most economically deprived regions with high levels of poverty, economic inactivity and (long term) unemployment • Lack of access to and provision of services, facilities and public transport in rural areas affecting vulnerable groups such as elderly, young and low income • Lowest level of formal education of all UK regions and lack of environmental knowledge • Northern Ireland still suffers from incidents and attacks related to punishment, sectarianism,

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
	<p>terrorism and the threat of dissidence, though this has reduced significantly over time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme weather events have disrupted a wide range of businesses and their operations; impacting on staff, premises, insurance and disrupting supply chains and energy, water and transport infrastructure
Health and Quality of Life	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good staffing levels for hospital and community health services • Surgeries better equipped in terms of IT than in rest of UK • Less difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas of NI compared to the rest of the UK • Noise Policy Statement being prepared to control environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise and improve quality of life • Recent development and promotion of health and exercise trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of fuel poverty of any UK region • Higher infant mortality than UK and much of Europe • Higher rates of obesity than most of Europe, though lower than rest of UK • Low levels of physical activity (through better than UK average) • Lack of public access to green space and woodlands in particular under-used • increasing fatalities of vulnerable older people from flooding, heatwaves, cold snaps, air pollution and storms • Number of noise complaints increasing
Soil and Land Use	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant natural resources including carbon rich peaty soils and grassland to capture and store carbon along with good biomass potential • Good quality soil and less erosion compared to UK • Good proportion of land under agri-environment schemes • Very geologically diverse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfield development still prevailing in rural areas, particularly single dwellings • Long-term degradation of peatland • Loss of soil organic matter and fertility due to intensification of agriculture • Prolonged periods of heavy rain and drought affecting land quality and crop production • NI least wooded country in the EU • Woodlands typically unmanaged, inaccessible, small and fragmented with limited new planting • Abandonment of upland farms due to an aging farming demographic resulting in landscape dereliction • NI's land tenure system (small farms, short-term lettings) mean landscape scale improvements can be difficult • Risk that the total land under agri-environment schemes will fall dramatically when current schemes end in 2015

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Water	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical quality of rivers has improved in last decade • Good quality of marine, drinking and groundwater • Intact peatlands have good water storage potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few rivers classed as good ecological quality with no improvement in recent years – unlikely to meet targets of EU Water Framework Directive • Historically poor manure management and fertiliser use has polluted many lakes and rivers, though improving due to Nitrates Action Programme • Some concerns regarding quality of bathing and shellfish growing waters in Irish Sea, and absence of Shoreline Management Plans in NI • Inappropriate offshore renewable energy, oil exploration, tourism-related developments, sea-level change and coastal protection affect marine and coastal waters • Localised flood events caused by intense and/or prolonged rainfall and local conditions experienced across the Region with increasing frequency • Predicted reductions in summer rainfall may reduce river flows, affecting water supply and quality
Air Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards for sulphur dioxide, lead and particulate matter (dust) being met • Ammonia emissions reduced slightly in past decade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though better than rest of UK, nitrogen dioxide levels exceeded standards at three monitoring sites and not improving long-term • Burning of coal due to poor availability of natural gas causing exceedance of hydrocarbon (PAH) standards • 12 Planning authorities have declared total of 28 Air Quality Management Areas for nitrogen dioxide or particulate matter, mainly due to road transport emissions • High dependency on cars in rural areas • Ammonia emissions from agriculture affecting sensitive habitats (eutrophication) • Increases in temperature as the climate changes will lead to changes in the chemistry associated with ozone formation, potentially causing breathing problems and damage to crops and vegetation

Strengths and Opportunities

Weaknesses and Threats

Climate Change

- Carbon dioxide and total greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 16% and 17.5% respectively since 1990
- Good natural resource availability for renewable energy production, e.g. offshore wind, tidal and wave
- Good opportunities to develop low carbon technology
- 14.3% of electricity produced from renewable energy
- Peatland and grassland act as substantial carbon stores
- Government aim to double the area of tree cover over the next 50 years, improving long-term carbon storage
- Agro-forestry sector addressing GHG emissions through Implementation Partnership
- NI's grass and wheat yields projected to increase with warming climate, benefitting agriculture
- NI Cross Departmental Working Group preparing a climate change Adaptation Programme

- Greenhouse gas emissions falling more slowly in NI (17.5% since 1990) compared to rest of UK (29% reduction).
- Greenhouse gas emissions have increased much more than in rest of UK from transport (25%) and land use change (83%) since 1990
- Push for renewable energy may be weakened due to the availability of shale gas and oil
- Agriculture and infrastructure (e.g. transport, water, waste and energy) prone to disruption from increasing intensity/frequency of floods, drought and snow
- Changing climatic conditions may increase threat from pests, diseases and invasive species
- Seas around Northern Ireland are warming more quickly than around the rest of the UK
- Intensively farmed landscapes restrict the ability of people and wildlife to adapt to climate change

Material Assets

- Significant natural resources including water, carbon rich soils and high quality grassland
- Substantial renewable energy potential (including geothermal)
- Substantial mineral resources
- Levels of waste produced and sent to landfill are falling
- Recycling targets being met

- Extensive deposits of coal, peat and lignite along with availability of shale gas (found in County Fermanagh and the northwest) and oil (found in North Antrim and around Rathlin Island) may put move from fossil fuels to renewable energy under jeopardy
- Recycling rates lower than in rest of UK, particularly for electronics, textiles, plastics and food
- Continued reliance on landfill
- NI's natural resources, infrastructure and waste management likely to be impacted on by climate change

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Cultural Heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich heritage of archaeological sites, monuments and buildings providing evidence of human activity for 9,000 years • Archaeological sites and built heritage generally well preserved due to undeveloped nature of NI • NI's centralised heritage recording system has created a unified, standardised and advanced baseline data set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy of neglect and mistreatment of NI's built and archaeological heritage undermines its value among society • New build typically preferred to renovation/restoration of existing buildings • Cultural heritage may be at risk from coastal, fluvial and pluvial flooding and erosion related to a changing climate, changing land use, agricultural practices, vandalism/theft, renewable energy, funding, visitors, skills, materials and maintenance • Government target to reduce number of buildings and monuments on Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland Register will not be met • Enforcement of heritage legislation and planning policy in NI under resourced and not always carried out • Lack of coordination across rural tourism sector, with opportunities for sharing and promoting cultural heritage being missed
Landscape and Seascape	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giant's Causeway is a World Heritage Site with 'outstanding universal value' • Substantial land area designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • Major rural tourism attractions include the Giant's Causeway, the Mourne Mountains, the Glens of Antrim, and the Antrim (Causeway) coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI's World Heritage Site receives no legal protection (though is protected through regional policy) and may be at risk of inappropriate development • AONBs have very low levels of financial support available for management; no statutory management plans; and fail to qualify as Protected Areas under IUCN definitions – however they are protected by planning policy • Landscapes have been degraded by rural development (housing and infrastructure) and agricultural intensification • Lack of coordination across rural tourism sector, with opportunities for sharing and promoting landscape assets being missed
Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some important nationally designated sites, country parks, National Trust properties and Local Nature Reserves in NI's urban areas providing recreation and education opportunities and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and regeneration within urban areas in NI has resulted in a loss of green space and soil sealing, with negative impacts on biodiversity, aesthetics and flooding • Disparity to public access to woodland in NI, with

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
<p>engagement with nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many councils are promoting visits to parks and developing new allotment sites • Social use of woodland is increasing • Natural environment contributed £573 million to the NI economy in 2006 • Substantial coastline provides critical natural defences against storms, floods and erosion as well as productive and biologically diverse ecosystems • Substantial grassland and peatland are excellent carbon stores • Extensive hedgerow networks provide connectivity across the landscape whilst helping to minimise soil erosion • Ecological, carbon and greenhouse gas footprints are lower than the UK 	<p>most being located far from where people live</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mechanism for co-operation of landowners or advice on where to direct funding regarding the creation of multi-functional networks of green infrastructure • Sea level rise and flood defenses may have significant implications for coastal ecosystem services • Lack of environmental knowledge transfer and integration of environmental skills amongst agriculture and forestry sectors and rural communities • Environmental management can sometimes be considered a separate rather than integral part of production systems, whilst integration of environmental issues into all sectors and cross-sector support are lacking • Ecosystem services are not fully recognised or understood by Northern Ireland's politicians or communities • The economic importance of Northern Ireland's tourism sector is the lowest of all the UK regions

4 How has the SPPS been assessed?

The SPPS has been assessed against a number of SEA objectives designed to cover the broad range of environmental issues facing Northern Ireland. These objectives are 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 significance of impacts of the FSD objectives, core planning principles and subject planning policies.

Assessments of alternatives to the SPPS as a whole and to the new Town Centres and Retailing policy 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. Opportunities for improvement and measures to address possible impacts have also been identified.

5 What are the alternatives?

Alternatives were considered at two tiers: a higher level which assessed alternatives to the SPPS as a whole; and a lower level which considered alternative delivery mechanisms for elements of the new policy.

At the higher level, three strategic alternatives have been assessed against the SEA objectives in order to inform the drafting of the SPPS; this was carried out in late 2013. These alternatives include:

- Alternative 1: Retain existing policy framework;
- Alternative 2: Reconfigure and consolidate policies; and
- Alternative 3: Fundamental review to reflect emerging good practice.

It was considered that each alternative had environmental strengths and weaknesses, with Alternative 1 faring the worst due to concerns regarding ecology, soil, water, climate, material assets, green infrastructure and ecosystem services. Alternative 2, though largely a consolidation of the policies contained in Alternative 1, is noticeably more positive due to new content on sustainable development, energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, health and wellbeing, green infrastructure and the marine environment. Alternative 3 adds innovative and particularly environmentally friendly elements from Scottish, English and Welsh national planning documents and thus performs the best from an environmental and ecosystem services perspective.

The option DOE chose to take forward to public consultation in February 2014 was Alternative 2 because the SPPS is intended to largely focus on a reconfiguration and consolidation of existing provisions. It would not be appropriate at this stage to perform a full review of planning policy until the reformed two-tier planning system (i.e. transfer of powers to the new Councils in 2015) has had adequate time to bed-down. Alternative 3 has nevertheless fed into recommendations made for enhancing the drafting of the SPPS.

At the lower level, it was not considered reasonable to assess alternatives for each of the subject policies. However, following a Ministerial direction, DOE has drafted new policy for Town Centres and Retailing to reflect the updated evidential context, i.e. a move towards a town centres first approach. As such, the SEA has addressed this in greater detail than the other planning policies, including consideration of alternative options. The three alternatives are:

- Alternative 1: Retain PPS 5
- Alternative 2: Town Centre First
- Alternative 3: Greater market choice

The SPPS drafted for public consultation in February 2014 was based on Alternative 2. This stems from the evidence base provided by a team of researchers led by consultancy GL Hearn, which recommended a town centre first approach. The environmental impacts of a town centre first approach versus greater flexibility to choose edge of town or out of town sites

depends on the local situation, for example how biodiverse the individual greenfield or brownfield sites are (contrary to popular belief previously developed sites often contain a greater number and variety of species than the fields surrounding a town), and how accessible the various sites are by sustainable transport modes.

For other subject policies there have been improvements made at each stage of the drafting of the SPPS. These have been made taking into account comments received as a result of the consultation process.

6 How has the SEA process influenced the SPPS?

The SEA is an iterative process and has fed into the drafting of the SPPS on an ongoing basis. The draft SPPS issued for public consultation on 4 February 2014 also reflected comments received at the preliminary stakeholder seminars and during the scoping consultation. Changes to the draft SPPS included:

- Emphasising the need for a more balanced approach between economic, environmental and social considerations;
- Referring to the marine environment;
- Requiring the planning system to contribute to “the conservation of soil and bog lands; managing development to safeguard against water pollution and to secure improvements in water quality”;
- Referring to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which places a statutory duty on every public body to further the conservation of biodiversity.

During the public 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. ADAS presented the findings of the draft Environmental Report at some of these events, holding question and answer sessions on the environmental and sustainability aspects of the draft SPPS. DOE received a total of 725 responses to the draft SPPS (including 561 petition style representations); many of these contained elements relating to the environment or general sustainability and have contributed to the revision of the SPPS to its current and final form. These revisions include:

- Placing additional emphasis on the importance of place making and good design;
- Setting out the importance of ecosystem services and the value of a healthy environment in contributing to economic and social sustainability as central guiding principles;
- Referring to the broader economic and community benefits that can flow from investment in and conservation of archaeological / built heritage assets;
- Referring to and protecting the outstanding universal value of NI’s World Heritage Site;

- Strengthening certain policies by replacing references to 'should ', with 'must ' or 'will ' (e.g. relating to the built environment and flooding);
- Referring to the need to carry out SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of local plans; and HRA and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of development proposals.

Some of the enhancement measures proposed in the draft Environmental Report have also been incorporated into the final SPPS. These include:

- 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.

Section 5.7 of the Environmental Report summarises the main differences between the policies set out in the current PPSs, those set out in the dSPPS which was published for public consultation in February 2014, and those selected for the final SPPS to be adopted in 2015. It should be noted that it was not considered necessary to undertake an assessment of alternatives for all draft changes in the development of the SPPS because the strategic thrust of those policies remain the same.

7 What are the likely environmental impacts of the SPPS?

As a result of the above-mentioned enhancements being implemented within the finalised SPPS, it is expected to have much greater beneficial effects on the environment than either the previously drafted SPPS or the current planning policy regime. This is due to a new and reworded chapter on furthering sustainable development, and core planning principles

greatly improving the likely environmental and wider sustainability performance of the planning regime, particularly with regards to health and well-being, ecosystem services and cultural heritage. Particularly welcome additions are: ‘The Importance of Ecosystems Services’ (FSD-3) and more emphasis on climate change adaptation (FSD-2) within the new chapter on the objective of furthering sustainable development; extensive detail on (and an environmental focus to) supporting good design (CPP-4); emphasising the critical role of the natural and built environment in supporting the economy, and referring to the need to conduct SEA, HRA and EIA (CPP-5); much more emphasis being given to the protection and enhancement of archaeology and built heritage assets (SPP-1); further policy prescription on development in the countryside (SPP-4); emphasis on the use of permeable materials and sustainable drainage for hard landscaped surfaces (SPP-6); greater recognition and protection for NI’s peatland (SPP-8 and SPP-11); a requirement for Open Space Strategies (SPP-10); encouraging telecoms operators to share masts (SPP-12); prioritising pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in urban centres (SPP-15); and emphasising the importance of sustainable waste management (SPP-16).

However, the SEA also identified uncertain effects related to planning policies on economic development (SPP-5), telecommunications (SPP-12) and town centres and retailing (SPP-14). This is largely because their effect on biodiversity and cultural heritage will depend on the extent to which planning authorities choose to balance environmental, social and economic considerations through their implementation at local level. The potentially adverse effects of the SPPS are considered to be only negligible to minor, and should be addressed at the plan-making level through implementing the SPPS in its entirety; and at the decision-taking level through compliance with legislation and standard survey and mitigation procedures. Consequently no specific mitigation for the SPPS has been proposed.

The likely beneficial and uncertain impacts of the revised SPPS are summarised by sustainability topic below. (Corresponding furthering sustainable development, core planning principles and subject planning policy references are shown in brackets).

Table 7.1: Likely Impacts of the SPPS on the Environment

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
Ecology and Nature Conservation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working towards halting the loss of biodiversity (FSD-1 and CPP-5) Identifying the condition of ecosystems should be integrated into plan-making and decision-taking processes (FSD-3) Managing green infrastructure to improve habitats for wildlife (CPP-1) Requiring Habitats Regulations Assessment for plans and projects affecting Natura 2000 sites (CPP-5) Safeguarding against loss of distinctive coastal habitats (SPP-2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning policies on development in the countryside (SPP-4), economic development (SPP-5), housing (SPP-7), telecoms/utilities (SPP-12), tourism (SPP-13), town centres (SPP-14) and transport (SPP-15) do not specifically refer to the natural environment, however planning

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricting peat extraction for boglands valuable to nature conservation interests (SPP-8) Requirements for conservation, enhancement and restoration of NI's natural heritage (SPP-9) Ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification (SPP-9) Stressing the importance of natural heritage outside of protected sites and requiring LDPs to consider incorporating biodiversity features in regeneration plans (SPP-9) Ensuring new open space and sporting facilities help to sustain and enhance biodiversity and stressing the importance of linear open spaces for providing wildlife corridors/ecological networks (SPP-10) Compensatory measures such as a habitat management plan or the creation of a new habitat required where renewable energy developments would result in unavoidable damage to the natural environment (SPP-11) 	<p>authorities should not consider these policies in isolation when determining planning applications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal protection schemes and their physical impact are no longer referred to (SPP-2)

Socio-Economics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support economic recovery and tackle disadvantage through promoting investment in the physical regeneration of deprived and derelict areas, and large scale proposals with job creation potential (FO-1) Address social barriers between people from different backgrounds (CPP-2) Proactively support and enable growth generating activities, particularly large scale investments with job creation potential (CPP-3) Improve the health, vitality and economic potential of places (CPP-4) Improved employment and income in both rural and urban areas, along with improved integration between transport, employment, housing and public services (SPP-5) Improve accessibility to services and facilities; protect people, business and infrastructure from flooding; expand telecommunications and utilities; boost tourism; and regenerate deprived areas (various) New focus on emphasising the contribution of NI's natural and built heritage resource, good quality housing, renewable energy, telecommunications and other strategic infrastructure, tourism, town centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of policy allowing for designation of Dispersed Rural Communities may reduce overall positive socioeconomic effect of SPP-4.

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
and waste management to economic growth, employment and a prosperous society (various)	
Health and Quality of Life	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the long-term sustainability of development, particularly through improving community resilience to extreme weather events (FSD-2) • Councils to consider the relationship between ES and human health in plan-making and decision-taking (FSD-3) • Improve health and wellbeing through addressing noise and air pollution, enhancing green infrastructure and promoting its use for outdoor recreation, and providing safe, high quality places (CPP-1) • Improving the quality of residential environments e.g. by recognising the mental and physical well-being benefits of amenity space (CPP-1 and SPP-7) • Mineral extraction (SPP-8) and waste management (SPP-16) require the minimisation of impacts on local communities and restoration of sites post-use • Recognition that planning for nature and green space in neighbourhoods and regeneration plans can improve health and quality of life (SPP-9) • Promoting open space, sport and recreation (SPP-10) • Improvements in provision and access to sustainable transport; enhancing access to the countryside; protecting, restoring and enhancing landscapes and the natural and built environment; and minimising flood risk (various) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Soil and Land Use	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the planning system contributes to the conservation of soil and bog lands (FSD-1) • Re-use existing (derelict) buildings, brownfield land and disused transport routes (FSD-1 and SPPs 1, 4, 5, 7, 15 and 16) • Prevent development in areas at risk from coastal erosion or land instability (SPP-2) • Cluster new development in the countryside with existing established buildings (as opposed to the prevalent dispersed pattern of development regarding single dwellings) (SPP-4) • Encouraging the use of permeable materials for hard landscaped surfaces to reduce soil sealing (SPP-6) • Promote the use of sustainable drainage in new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting development in town centres and existing settlements could reduce urban drainage potential if permeable materials not used (SPP-7 and PP-14) • Possible soil erosion from promotion of tourism in rural areas (SPP-13)

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<p>development (SPP-7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect good quality agricultural land from mineral extraction and development of waste management facilities (SPP-8 and SPP-16) • Restrictions on the extraction of peat (SPP-8) 	
Water	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the planning system contributes to a reduction in water usage, and future investment in water and sewerage infrastructure (FSD-1) • Manage development to safeguard against water pollution and to secure improvements in water quality (FSD-1) • Management of green infrastructure as a multifunctional resource, including as flood water storage (CPP-1) • Retention and restoration of natural flood plains and natural watercourses (SPP-6) • Preventing the artificial modification of watercourses where this would impact on flood risk (SPP-6) • Consider how the design of a development can minimise water usage (SPP-6) • Encouraging the use of sustainable drainage systems by developers (SPP-6 and SPP-7) • Preventing the pollution of rivers, watercourses and ground water regarding mineral extraction (SPP-8) and waste management (SPP-16) • Protection of wetlands (SPP-9) • Protection of urban greenspace (SPP-10) • Only permit renewable energy development where it will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on local water quality (SPP-11) • Highlights the water storage capacities of peatland (SPP-11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies such as economic development (SPP-5), housing (SPP-7) and town centres (SPP-14) do not specifically refer to the need to prevent impacts on water quality or quantity, so the SPPS must be considered as a whole if Water Framework Directive targets are to be met • Text to protect the coast (including marine areas) from the actual or potential effects of pollution has been removed (SPP-2)
Air Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers are expected to consider the cumulative effect of developments on air quality, particularly within AQMAs, and consult with both the local planning authority and those with responsibility for air quality (CPP-1) • Requiring new development in the countryside to take place in existing settlements rather than isolated areas should reduce car use (SPP-4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though not specifically mentioned, renewable energy sources such as biomass from waste and anaerobic digesters may exacerbate ammonia problems (SPP-11) • Strengthening town centres could increase

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising and facilitating public transport and walking and cycling over use of the car and reducing the need to travel entirely through sustainable design of new (mixed-use) development (SPP-5, SPP-10 and SPP-15) • Only permitting renewable energy development where it will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on local air quality (SPP-11) • Avoiding or minimising detrimental effects on people, the environment, and local amenity associated with waste management facilities (e.g. pollution) (SPP-16) • Waste treatment facilities should be located in close proximity to the areas they service, with easy access to key (rail and water) transport corridors (SPP-16) • Encouraging a modal shift away from car use to contribute to improvements in air quality arising from reduced vehicular emissions (various) 	<p>traffic congestion in town centres if sustainable transport modes are not prioritised (SPP-14)</p>
Climate Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build resilience to extreme heat and floods; reduce the need to travel; limit resource and energy requirements of development; avoid areas with particular vulnerability to storms, flooding, landslip and coastal erosion; utilise low carbon sources of heat and power; and improve energy efficiency (FSD-2) • Emphasis on the importance of adaptation to climate change (FSD-2) • Consider and address how the design of a development can minimise energy and CO² emissions (CPP-4) • Prevent future development that may be at risk from flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and retain and restore natural flood plains and natural watercourses (SPP-6) • Encourage use of SuDS in redevelopment/regeneration schemes as well as new build, and use of permeable materials for hard landscaped surfaces, whilst a Drainage Assessment will be required for certain development proposals (SPP-6) • Promote public awareness of flood risk and a joined up approach to managing flood risk across local authority boundaries (SPP-6) • Supporting movement by cyclists and providing adequate, convenient access to public transport (SPP-7 and SPP-15) • Promotion and facilitation of renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<p>developments and technology (SPP-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection, enhancement or creation of open space (SPP-10), green and blue infrastructure (CPP-1), and peatland, woodland and wetland (SPP-9) • Water and carbon storage capacities of peatland recognised and peat extraction restricted (SPP-11 and SPP-8) 	
Material Assets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make use of previously developed land, redundant buildings and disused transport corridors (FSD-1, SPPs 1, 4, 5, 7, 15 and 16) • Conserving limited natural resources (FSD-1, CPP-4, PP-10) • Use of materials that are local and respect the characteristics of conservation areas (SPP-1) and protected landscapes (SPP-9) • Planning authorities to take into account the availability of adequate infrastructure when zoning land for economic development (SPP-5) • Prevent overexploitation of mineral sites, safeguard workable resources for future potential development, and restore sites to a relevant use at the earliest opportunity after working has ceased (SPP-8) • Reducing the amount of waste materials and moving towards resource efficiency (SPP-16) • Treat and/or dispose of wastes in reasonable proximity to their point of generation (SPP-16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Cultural Heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and improve the built environment, including achieving good design (FSD-1) • Sustainable re-use of historic buildings is encouraged in preference to new build (FSD-2 and SPP-4) • When designing development, particular weight should be given to the impact on listed buildings, monuments in state care and scheduled monuments (CPP-4) • Emphasis on the the critical role archaeological and built heritage plays in supporting the local economy and contributing to sense of place, history and cultural identity (CPP-5) • Secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of NI's built and archaeological heritage (SPP-1) • Historic environment linked with opportunities for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies on economic development (SPP-5), town centres (SPP-14) and telecoms/utilities (SPP-12) do not specifically refer to the need to protect or enhance heritage assets, so the SPPS must be considered as a whole when implemented locally • The sympathetic conversion and re-use of non-listed vernacular

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<p>investment and economic and community benefit (SPP-1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for access to the coast, outdoor advertisements, new housing in settlements, minerals extraction, renewable energy development, and waste facilities will only be permitted where they do not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on built heritage interests (SPP-2, 3, 7, 8, 11 and 16) • Consider the impact of flooding on archaeology and built heritage (SPP-6) • Preventing new housing that would result in town cramming or damage to areas of distinctive townscape character (SPP-7) • Safeguarding of historical and archaeological sites from unnecessary, inappropriate or excessive development to maintain a healthy tourism industry (SPP-13) 	<p>buildings is no longer required (SPP-1)</p>
Landscape and Seascape	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific reference to ‘landscape and seascape’ in the environment pillar (FO-1) • Design, manage, protect and provide strategic networks of green space (CPP-1) • Adequate private, semi-private and public amenity space will be a prime consideration in all residential development (CPP-1) • Maintain the character of features and areas within and adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance (CPP-4 and SPP-1) • Recognition of the outstanding universal value of NI’s World Heritage Site (SPP-1) • Protect from undesirable, excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development (SPP-1, 2, 3 and 4) • Promote the enhancement and regeneration of urban waterfronts (SPP-2) • Conserve the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast and countryside (SPP-2 and SPP-4) • Advertisements to contribute positively to the appearance of a well-cared for and attractive environment (SPP-3) • Re-use of existing buildings and the taking into account of Landscape Character Assessments required for countryside developments (SPP-4) • Designation and protection of Special Countryside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions on developing in AONBs (carried forward from the extant PPS 2) are considered to be ineffective by environmental stakeholders (SPP-9)

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<p>Areas and Areas of High Scenic Value (SPP-4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping is generally proposed as mitigation for economic (SPP-5), residential (SPP-7), minerals (SPP-8) and tourism (SPP-13) development, particularly to address visual impacts • Extraction of peat will must be consistent with the protection of landscape quality, particularly in AONBs (SPP-8) • Promote opportunities for the enhancement or restoration of degraded landscapes (SPP-9) • Presumption against the loss of open space (SPP-10) • Zoning of land in LDPs must provide adequate green and blue infrastructure and designate open space that performs a strategic function such as landscape wedges in urban areas (SPP-10) • Ensuring that the landscape, visual and amenity impacts associated with renewable energy and waste facilities are adequately considered and addressed (SPP-11 and SPP-16) • Cautious approach to designated landscapes (i.e. the WHS and AONBs) and their wider settings (SPP-11) 	
Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils required 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 (FSD-3) • Design, manage, protect and provide strategic networks of green space in order to deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits (CPP-1) • Greater recognition of the contribution the countryside and coast make to health and wellbeing (CPP-1) • Ensure that LDPs and marine plans are complementary, particularly with regard to the inter-tidal area (SPP-2) • Design concepts to be agreed with developers incorporating sustainable elements such as provision for cycling, provision of open space and landscaping integrated with broader green and blue infrastructure systems, and use of sustainable drainage systems (SPP-7) • Promote green and blue infrastructure where this will add value to the provision, enhancement and connection of open space and habitats in and around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

Likely Beneficial Effects	Uncertain or Potentially Adverse Effects
<p>settlements (SPP-9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that natural heritage both within and outside designated areas delivers ES (SPP-9) • Areas of open space and sporting facilities provided as part of new residential development should be managed long term to help sustain and enhance biodiversity (SPP-10) • Facilitate appropriate outdoor recreational activities in the countryside (SPP-10) • Councils required to designate open space that performs a strategic function such as landscape wedges in urban areas, improve connectivity by requiring the zoning of land in LDPs to take account of the importance of linear open spaces for providing wildlife corridors/ecological networks, and provide adequate green and blue infrastructure (SPP-10) • Recognition of the ecosystem services provided by peatland, including habitat provision, and water and carbon storage (SPP-11) • Protection to disused transport corridors for recreational, nature conservation or tourism uses (SPP-15) • References to the health, wellbeing and social benefits that people’s engagement with a high quality environment can bring (various) 	

The assessment of cumulative effects considered the impact on ecology of SPP-4 (development in the countryside), SPP-5 (economic development), SPP-7 (housing in settlements), SPP-12 (telecoms/utilities), SPP-13 (tourism), SPP-14 (town centres) and SPP-15 (transport), and the impact on cultural heritage of SPP-5, SPP-12 and SPP-14. These policies were selected as they don’t specifically refer to the need to protect the natural or built environment, potentially putting urban ecosystems and heritage assets at risk; however, overall the SPPS is expected to strongly benefit NI’s natural and built heritage. To avoid cumulative effects it should be ensured that planning authorities implement the SPPS in its entirety and that balanced decision making is undertaken at the local level.

In-combination effects on the environment between the SPPS (particularly SPP-5 and SPP-14 due to their economic focus) and other plans and programmes promoting urban economic development were also considered. It was felt that there could be in-combination effects with the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy published by the Executive in 2012 as this does not refer to the need to consider, protect or enhance the natural environment or biodiversity. Again a balanced approach to decision making, taking into account the SPPS (when published

in final form) and constituent policies in their entirety, is required to prevent in-combination effects.

8 What are the key recommendations for enhancing the beneficial effects of the SPPS?

The SPPS's strong focus on sustainable development, climate change, health and wellbeing and design quality will add to the benefits delivered through the current Planning Policy Statements. However, if resources allow, even more could be done to maximise the environmental benefits. Enhancement measures are suggested below, by sustainability topic; such measures may be regarded as best practice, but neither DOE nor planning authorities are under any obligation to consider or endorse these. (Corresponding SPPS policies and principles are shown in brackets if relevant).

Table 8.1: Recommendations for Enhancing the SPPS

Sustainability Topics	Possible Enhancement Measures
Ecology and Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider edge of or out of town sites where brownfield land in town centres is found to be substantially more biologically diverse than surrounding greenfield land (SPP-14) Consider the need to protect marine ecosystems from inappropriate economic development, coastal development, renewable energy and tourism/recreation (SPP-9) Seek opportunities for restoration of wetland habitat (SPP-6) Consider identifying areas where managed realignment¹ (and thus creation of e.g. saltmarsh habitat) may be appropriate (SPP-2) Emphasise the need to improve the condition of ecological corridors and habitats within the wider countryside (SPP-9)
Socio-Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain local services and community facilities in rural settlements and consider a more even spread of economic activity to relieve pressures in high growth areas (SPP-4) Make even more of the natural and historic environment for sustainable tourism (SPP-13)
Health and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All previously suggested enhancement measures have been incorporated into the SPPS
Soil and Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soil from erosion, compaction and contamination, and consider remediation of despoiled and degraded land (SPP-9) Improve the multi-functionality of open space provided as part of housing developments by encouraging its use as allotments or market gardens (SPP-7)

¹ Managed realignment is the practice of removing hard-engineered coastal defence structures, allowing saltmarsh to develop which absorbs wave energy and offers soft coastal protection. As well as creating new wildlife habitat, long term defence costs are reduced through shortening the overall length of defences to be maintained.

Sustainability Topics	Possible Enhancement Measures
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the likely impacts of economic development, coastal development, renewable energy and tourism/recreation upon the marine environment (SPP-2) Require planning authorities to proactively contribute to meeting EU river quality targets (FSD-1)
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest that town centre/retailing traffic be routed away from residential areas where possible (SPP-14) Specify the need for greater control of polluting energy sources (e.g. biomass from waste and anaerobic digesters) (SPP-11)
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas where managed realignment may be appropriate, and give greater consideration to the impacts of climate change on the coastal zone (SPP-2) Consider allocating land for development in areas where reducing energy use and promoting low carbon sources of energy will be most achievable (SPP-11) Encourage a move towards a low carbon or green economy, including innovation in energy infrastructure (FSD-2, SPP-5, SPP-11 or SPP-12)
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasise that natural resources should be used sustainably and not irrevocably depleted (FSD-1, SPP-8 or SPP-9) Encourage cross boundary/border working regarding water supply and waste water (FSD-1 or SPP-12)
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage planning authorities to renovate/restore existing (historic) buildings in preference to new build specifically for economic and town centre development (SPP-5 and SPP-14)
Landscape and Seascape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further strengthen protection of NI's World Heritage Site and AONBs against inappropriate development and manage them to maintain their special features in good condition (SPP-1 and SPP-9) Encourage development proposals to take account of the amenity and existing use of land and buildings as well as quality of greenspace provision over the whole lifetime of the development (CPP-4)
Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote greater educational (and tourism) use of the natural and historic environment (SPP-1, SPP-9, SPP-10 and SPP-13) Encourage planning authorities to implement Shoreline Management Plans (SPP-2) Ensure that planning authorities consider the costs and benefits of a development over its entire lifetime (FSD-1)

9 Monitoring measures proposed through the SEA

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. 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.

Nevertheless, a range of potential actions that could be considered to monitor the environment were developed during the SEA process and are set out in Section 9.1 of the Environmental report. 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 the table below.

Table 9.1: 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.
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

Strategic Level (DOE)	Local Level (Councils)
Area of new Open Space provisioned for in LDPs for biodiversity.	designated sites (including nature conservation, heritage and landscape designations), Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record sites, and the proportion permitted.
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.	

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 final SPPS. Instead, a sub-section on 'Implementation, Monitoring and Review' has been included in the section on Local Development Plans which requires Councils to report annually to the Department on whether the objectives in their Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan are being achieved, through undertaking monitoring and regular reviews of their LDPs.

10 What will happen next?

Once the SPPS has been adopted, an SEA Statement will be produced to provide further information on how the Environmental Report and consultees' opinions were taken into account in deciding the final form of the SPPS. The Statement will also set out the above mentioned monitoring proposals to monitor the impact of the SPPS on the environment through the plan-making and decision-taking processes carried out by the new local councils, as well as greater detail on the monitoring incorporated into the final SPPS.