

# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report: Final Determination

Longford Local Economic &  
Community Plan 2016 – 2022



Planning & Environmental Consultants

## DOCUMENT DETAILS

**Client:** Longford County Council

**Project title:** Longford Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2022

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**Project Number:** 150116

**Document Title:** SEA Screening Report: Final Determination

**Doc. File Name:** 150116 - SEA Screening: Final Determination - 2016.06.21 – F1

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### Document Issue:

Rev	Status	Issue Date	Document File Name	Author(s)	Approved By:
01	Final	2016.06.21	150116 - SEA Screening: Final Determination - 2016.06.21 – F1	LM	MW

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Longford County Council has prepared the Longford Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022, in accordance with Section 66C of the Local Government Reform Act (2014). The LECP sets out a number of objectives and actions to promote and support economic and community development within the county.

The Draft LECP was prepared by Longford County Council in early 2016. Under the requirements of the relevant Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation, as outlined below, Longford County Council was required during preparation of the Draft LECP to determine if the Plan should be subject to SEA. McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan (MKO) was appointed by Longford County Council to conduct a screening exercise for the Draft Plan, to determine if SEA was required prior to its adoption.

The initial screening exercise determined that SEA of the Draft Plan was not required, as detailed in Section 2.1 of this report. The Draft Plan and SEA Screening Report were referred to the statutory environmental authorities for consultation in April 2016, as detailed in Section 2.2.

This report forms the Final Determination in relation to SEA Screening of the Longford LECP 2016 – 2022.

## 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt it. Under the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), transposed onto Irish legislation by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 – 2011, certain plans or programmes are subject to SEA prior to their adoption and implementation.

Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan or programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore warrants SEA.

## 2 SEA SCREENING

### 2.1 Initial Screening Determination

The Longford Draft Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022 was screened for the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The conclusions of this screening exercise determined that the Draft Plan did not meet the criteria that set the threshold for the completion of SEA, as follows:

- The Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- The Plan does not have the potential to result in impacts on any European sites or to influence other plans or projects in a manner that could potentially impact thereon, and therefore does not require a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive; and
- The Plan does not meet Schedule 2A criteria for plans or programmes likely to have significant environmental effects.

In summary, the initial screening determined that implementation of the goals and actions as set out in the Draft LECP will not give rise to significant environmental impacts, and an SEA was therefore not required. It was noted in particular that the LECP will be implemented in compliance with the statutory planning and environmental framework and higher level plans, including the Longford County Development Plan, which has been subject to SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

The results of the initial screening exercise were documented in an SEA Screening Report, which is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.

### 2.2 Consultation with Statutory Environmental Authorities

Under the requirements of Article 9(5) of the SEA Regulations 2004 (as amended), the SEA Screening report was forwarded to the relevant statutory environmental authorities with the Draft LECP on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016 for consultation. The statutory consultees, as listed below, were invited to make a submission or observation in relation to whether or not implementation of the LECP would be likely to have significant effects on the environment:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG)
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)
- Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHG)

The adjoining Local Authorities of Counties Cavan, Leitrim, Roscommon and Westmeath were also consulted on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

Two responses were received from the statutory consultees: from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016 and the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016. The main points of these submissions are presented below, along with a comment on how these points have been addressed in the LECP.

## 2.2.1 EPA Submission

### 2.2.1.1 Submission Point 1: SEA Determination

- (i) *“We recommend considering the inclusion of an additional high level goal for the LECP, relating to “protecting the receiving environment” in implementing the LECP.”*

It is a high level goal of the LECP to *‘utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development’*. Inherent to this goal is the protection of the natural environment, as specified under Objective SCO6.3: *‘Preservation of the natural environment of Longford’*, which is further broken down into a number of specific actions. Preservation of the natural environment of Longford has been identified and stated in the LECP as a cross-cutting theme within the Plan.

- (ii) *“We acknowledge that the LECP needs to be consistent with any regional ‘spatial and economic strategy’ and recommend that a commitment is included to ensure consistency with the Core Strategy and objectives of the County Development Plan (CDP). In particular, it would also be useful to include a commitment that the environmental-related policies and objectives of the CDP will be complied with in implementing the LECP.”*

The LECP Goals, Objectives and Actions have been developed with cognisance of the relevant spatial planning strategies, including the County Development Plan. Objective SCO6.3 of the LECP contains a commitment to comply with the environmental policies and objectives of the County Development Plan. This is specified in Action C6.3.1: *‘Protect the natural environment by ensuring balance between conservation and development through the implementation of the following: Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, Biodiversity Action Plan, and National Pollinators Plan’*.

- (iii) *“The LECP could consider encouraging community level activities in areas such as energy conservation, water conservation, river clean-ups, riparian zone protection measures, awareness and appropriate control of invasive species etc., which would be beneficial for both local communities as well as the environment. Supporting measures which promote and encourage local eco-tourism ventures, fishing/angling, bird watching, agri-tourism, supporting and encouraging citizen science activities such as local heritage mapping, supporting habitat restoration would also be beneficial in forming a closer link between social participation and involvement in and environmental protection at a local level.”*

Actions and initiatives in relation to water conservation, energy efficiency, road and community clean-ups, awareness campaigns in relation to biodiversity and hedge-cutting times, and addressing invasive species have been incorporated into the LECP as part of the Sustainable Community actions. It is also a Sustainable Economic Development Objective of the LECP to develop a vibrant economy in the county through the implementation of rural development initiatives. Such initiatives are also included in the actions associated with the Sustainable Community Development Objectives. In general, however, the LECP is a high-level plan, the focus of which is on economic and community development. This is underpinned by a high-level goal to utilise the natural, cultural & built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

- (iv) *“It may be useful to consider taking into account the relevant environmental topics contained in the SEA Environmental Monitoring Programme aspects of*

*the CDP, as appropriate, so that over the lifetime of the LECP the potential cumulative/in-combination effects can be reviewed.”*

The actions of the LECP will be subject to an annual review process. Measurement of progress will be against a range of national, regional or local indicators as deemed appropriate for each action. The monitoring and review process will be developed in further detail as part of the remit of the Local Community Development Committee, the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee and Longford County Council. The recommendation of the EPA in relation to the SEA Environmental Monitoring Programme aspects of the County Development Plan are noted in this regard.

#### **2.2.1.2 Submission Point 2: Future Amendments to the Draft LECP**

*“Longford County Council should determine whether or not any future proposed variations/amendments would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. This assessment should take account of the SEA Regulations.”*

Any future variations/amendments to the LECP will be subject to SEA Screening as per the requirements of the SEA Regulations.

#### **2.2.1.3 Submission Point 3: Infrastructure Planning**

*“In proposing the LECP and any related amendments, variations etc. of the LECP and in implementing the LECP, adequate and appropriate infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the particular LECP.”*

It is a high level goal of the LECP to maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit, work and transact business. This goal and related objectives and associated actions cover the remit of the provision of critical infrastructure. The development of infrastructure within the County will be carried out having regard to the protection of the natural, recreational and cultural amenities of the County, as required by the County Development Plan.

#### **2.2.1.4 Submission Point 4: Appropriate Assessment**

*“The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) should be consulted, as relevant and appropriate, with regard to screening of the Plan for Appropriate Assessment. Where Appropriate Assessment is required, any findings or recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and LECP, as appropriate.”*

The LECP was screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). This Screening Assessment determined that Plan could be screened out and was not required to proceed to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. A copy of the Screening Report was circulated to the consultees as described in Section 2.2 above, including the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHG). The response of the NPWS, via the DAHG response, is described in Section 2.2.2 below.

Any future variations/amendments to the LECP will be subject to AA Screening as per the requirements of Directive 92/43/EEC. Where full AA is required as a result of any variations/amendments, any findings or recommendations will be incorporated into the SEA and LECP as appropriate. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will

be consulted as part of any AA required as a result of variations/amendments to the LECP.

#### **2.2.1.5 Submission Point 5: SEA Screening Determination**

*“A copy of your decision regarding the determination should be made available for public inspection at your offices, local authority website and should also be notified to any Environmental Authorities already consulted.”*

Noted; this will be completed by Longford County Council.

### **2.2.2 Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs Submission**

#### **2.2.2.1 Submission Point 1: Nature Conservation**

*“Longford Town supports two or more distinct colonies of Swifts. Their requirements are for high buildings with spaces under the eaves which allow them access to nest. ... The NPWS of this Department recommend that planning within the town take account of these requirements and where possible design buildings to accommodate this species, or provide suitable nesting sites by providing swift boxes.”*

The recommendations of the Department are noted. While this specific issue falls outside the remit of the LECP, the Plan will be implemented in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and the National Biodiversity Action Plan. This is in accordance with the specific LECP action to protect the natural environment by ensuring balance between conservation and development.

#### **2.2.2.2 Submission Point 2: Archaeology**

*“The role of heritage in the provision of authentic and sustainable tourism and agri-tourism is also noted. Key to these aims will be the identification of the archaeological heritage assets of Co. Longford. I draw your attention to the Historic Environment Viewer of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which contains locations and details of Archaeological Monuments and Protected Structures <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>. This Department also has a Cultural Tourism Officer, Mr. Chris Corlett ([chris.corlett@ahg.gov.ie](mailto:chris.corlett@ahg.gov.ie)), who might be able to offer your Council some advice in designing a Cultural Tourism strategy for the County.”*

The recommended resources are noted by the Council.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

It was concluded that the EPA and DAHG submissions do not give rise to the requirement for an SEA, therefore this Final Determination does not alter the conclusion of the Initial Determination, which found that implementation of the LECP will not give rise to significant effects on the environment.



### **3 FINAL DETERMINATION SUBSEQUENT TO CONSULTATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES**

Having had regard to the requirements of SI No. 435/2004 EC Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended by SI No. 200/2001) and having consulted with the statutory Environmental Authorities and considered the submissions received, it is the final determination of this screening exercise that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required of the Longford LECP 2016 – 2022.

# Appendix 1

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## SEA Screening Report: Initial Determination

# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Longford Local Economic &  
Community Plan 2016 – 2022



Planning & Environmental Consultants

## DOCUMENT DETAILS

**Client:** Longford County Council

**Project title:** Longford Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2022

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**Project Number:** 150116

**Document Title:** SEA Screening Report

**Doc. File Name:** 150116 – SEA Screening – 2016.04.25 – D1

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### Document Issue:

Rev	Status	Issue Date	Document File Name	Author(s)	Approved By:
01	Draft	2016.04.25	150116 – SEA Screening – 2016.04.25 – D1	LM	PR

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

Longford County Council has prepared the Longford Draft Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022. The LECP sets out a number of objectives and actions to promote and support economic and community development within the county.

Under the requirements of the relevant Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation, as outlined below, Longford County Council was required during preparation of the Draft LECP to determine if the Plan should be subject to SEA. McCarthy Keville O’Sullivan (MKO) was appointed by Longford County Council to conduct a screening exercise for the Draft Plan, to determine if SEA of the Plan was required prior to its adoption.

## **1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening**

SEA is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt it. Under the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), transposed onto Irish legislation by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 – 2011, certain plans or programmes are subject to SEA prior to their adoption and implementation. Screening is the process for determining whether a particular plan or programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore warrants SEA.

## **1.3 Screening Report Overview**

Section 2 of this report provides an overview of the Longford Draft Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2022, including its main aims and objectives. Section 3 presents the results of the screening of the Draft Plan for SEA, with the main findings summarised in Section 4.

## **2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN**

### **2.1 Description of the Plan**

The Longford Draft Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022 was developed by Longford County Council through the Local Community Development Committee and the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee, in line with guidelines issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

The overall aim of the LECP is to support and encourage economic growth and regeneration, improve the quality of life through collaborative and sustainable community and rural development, strengthen sense of place and provide equality of opportunity for all residents of County Longford. The LECP is based on six high-level goals identified during the Plan's preparation:

1. Maximise economic activity, pursue new growth opportunities and support pathways to educational attainment.
2. Reduce poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion and promote equality in the community.
3. Improve prosperity, health/well-being and quality of life of the community.
4. Maximise the attractiveness of County Longford as a favourable place in which to live, visit, work and transact business.
5. Improve the level and quality of community identity and solidarity, civic pride and participation.
6. Utilise the natural, cultural and built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Each goal is broken down into a number of objectives and actions which are intended to promote and support economic development, and local and community development in Longford County. In order to support economic and community development, the LECP has been formulated with a framework of key sustainable economic development objectives and sustainable community objectives. These objectives are further broken down into actions.

As part of the implementation and monitoring phases of the LECP, each action within the Plan has been designed to contain clearly identifiable targets and desired outcomes with set implementation timescales. This provides a benchmark for the action plan against which achievements can be measured. It is envisaged that the successful implementation of the Plan will involve the active engagement of all stakeholders including the Local Authority, private and community sectors. The plan will be subject to annual review and adjustment as necessary.

### **2.2 Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of the Longford County Draft LECP is to promote and support the economic and community development of the county. This is provided through the actions detailed under each strategic objective. The setting of a project framework is carried out through other spatial plans in the county including the Longford County Development Plan. The Longford County Draft LECP aims to bring forward county and lower scale actions to develop the county economically and in terms of community, through the incorporation of actions from other higher tier plans and programmes.

## 2.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The Draft LECP sits within a hierarchy of land-use forward planning strategic actions. The Draft LECP must comply with relevant higher level strategic actions and may, in turn, guide lower level strategic actions. These Plans and strategies include:

- The National Spatial Strategy 2002 – 2020
- Midland Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPG's) 2010 - 2022
- Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021
- Longford Local Development Strategy (LEADER)
- Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014 – 2020
- Enterprise 2025 Strategy
- Food Wise 2015
- National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020
- Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020
- Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2015 - 2017
- Environmental Protection Objectives. Examples include:
  - EU Habitats Directive – the aim of which is to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of Member States
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment – Under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 – 2011, the local authority is obliged to carry out a screening assessment for environmental effects arising from the implementation of the objectives and actions contained in the LECP.



## 3 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) SCREENING

### 3.1 SEA Legislation

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans/programmes that are prepared for certain specified sectors. An SEA is mandatory for plans/programmes which are:

- Prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste / water management, telecommunications, tourism, town & country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive.

Or

- Have been determined to require a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.

For the plans/programmes not included above, a screening procedure is carried out to determine whether a plan/programme is likely to have significant environmental effects. If there are significant effects, an SEA of the plan/programme is required.

The screening procedure is based on criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as listed below:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:
  - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
  - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
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 cumulative nature of the effects,
  - the transboundary nature of the effects,
  - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
  - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
  - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
    - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,

- exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
- intensive land-use,
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

## 3.2 Requirement for SEA of the Draft Plan

### 3.2.1 Mandatory Requirement for SEA

The Longford Draft LECP 2016 – 2022 sets out objectives and actions to promote and support economic and community development in the county. The LECP does not set the framework for future development consent of projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and therefore SEA is not required on this basis.

An Appropriate Assessment screening of the Draft LECP has been carried out (see AA Screening Report), and concluded that implementation of the Plan does not have the potential to give rise to impacts on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site, or to influence other plans or projects in a manner that could potentially impact thereon. The Draft Plan therefore does not require a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive, and thus SEA is not required in this regard.

### 3.2.2 Schedule 2A Screening

For plans and programmes for which SEA is not mandatory, a screening procedure is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects. The objectives and actions set out in the Longford Draft LECP 2016 – 2022 under the headings of Sustainable Economic Development and Sustainable Community have been assessed against the relevant environmental criteria, which are listed in Section 3.1 above. These criteria relate to the characteristics of the Plan itself and to the characteristics of the effects of implementation of the Plan and of the area likely to be affected. The results of the SEA screening exercise for the Longford Draft LECP are summarised in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Assessment of the Draft LECP against Schedule 2A Criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
<b>1. Characteristics of the Plan</b>	
Degree to which the plan sets the framework for projects and other activities with regard to location, nature, size, operating conditions or by allocating resources	The Longford Draft LECP has been developed so as to be consistent with higher level plans, in particular the Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021. The LECP however is not a spatial plan, but a focussed action plan. The Plan provides a framework in which local and regional stakeholders can work collaboratively to achieve shared strategic objectives. The setting of a project framework is carried out by other, spatial plans such as the County Development Plan. The emphasis of the LECP is on collaboration and partnership, and as such the Plan does not specify the framework for other projects or activities in terms of their location, nature, size, operating conditions or allocation of resources.
Degree of influence on other plans	The LECP is influenced by a hierarchy of international, national, regional and local level plans, strategies and legislation, to which consideration was given throughout the preparation of the Plan. The LECP is

Criteria	Assessment
	<p>consistent with the core strategies of the relevant statutory guidance, including the Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022.</p> <p>The LECP will not have a significant influence on and therefore environmental effect on any other Plans. It aims to tie together existing plans and strategies to assist in the achievement of common goals, but sits below the relevant statutory legislation and plans. The role of the LECP is therefore complementary to, rather than having significant influence on, other Plans.</p>
<p>Relevance for integration of environmental considerations (promoting sustainable development)</p>	<p>The LECP includes a High Level Goal to utilise the natural, cultural and built environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. This goal is consistent with the core strategy of the Longford County Development Plan. The High Level Goal is broken down into a number of strategic objectives and actions under the headings of Rural Diversification, Regeneration, Social Infrastructure, Natural Environment and Built Environment. The focus of these objectives and actions is on supporting other existing plans and strategies in relation to economic and community development.</p> <p>The actions set out by the LECP for each topic are required to be consistent with the policies and objectives of higher level plans, including the Longford County Development Plan. The County Development Plan was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) to ensure that environmental considerations were fully integrated into the plan during its preparation. The LECP is consistent with the County Development Plan in its consideration of sustainable development but will not result in actions of sustainable development beyond those already contained in the County Plan.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan</p>	<p>The LECP focuses on economic and community development, and is not intended in itself to address specific environmental problems.</p> <p>The policies and objectives in existing legislation and statutory land-use plans, namely the Longford County Development Plan, provide the policy framework for the protection of the environment.</p>
<p>Relevance for implementation of EU legislation on the environment</p>	<p>The LECP builds upon other existing strategies and plans, with a focus on promoting and supporting local economic and community development. The Plan will not impact on the implementation of EU legislation on the environment. The LECP has been prepared so as to be consistent with and guided by the Longford County Development Plan, which is the primary driver</p>

Criteria	Assessment
	<p>in ensuring that environmental legislation is implemented in relation to planned or proposed projects. The policies and objectives of the County Development Plan which seek to protect and conserve environmentally sensitive areas will not be altered or affected by the LECP.</p>
<p><b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b></p>	
<p>Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</p>	<p>The focus of the LECP is on supporting collaboration between existing agencies and strategies. Any actions in the LECP that result in the development of new projects must be carried out in compliance with the statutory planning and environmental framework and higher level plans, including the County Development Plan, which has been subject to SEA and AA. Implementation of the LECP will therefore not give rise to specific environmental effects.</p>
<p>Cumulative nature of the effects</p>	<p>The LECP provides a framework for organisations in the county to link their own strategies and plans, to achieve common goals. The Plan aims to deliver positive changes that will guide and support economic and community development within the county, thereby creating an overall positive cumulative effect for the people of Co. Longford. However, the LECP has been prepared so as to be consistent with the County Development Plan, as detailed above, and therefore will not give rise to specific environmental effects or result in cumulative environmental impacts.</p>
<p>Transboundary nature of the effects</p>	<p>The LECP is a plan for Co. Longford, with a focus on local strategies and plans. No transboundary effects are identified as a result of implementation of the LECP. Implementation of the LECP will be subject to the environmental protection policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan, which has been subject to SEA and AA to ensure that negative transboundary effects do not occur.</p>
<p>Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)</p>	<p>Implementation of the LECP will not create any risks to human health or the environment. It is a High Level Goal of the LECP to improve health / well-being and the quality of life of the Co. Longford community. The Plan includes objectives to improve the quality and availability of health services and to provide a safe and secure environment for all. Implementation of the LECP actions will have regard to the County Development Plan, which requires the Council to assess applications for new development taking account of The Major Accidents Directive (Seveso Directive) and the possible impact on public health and safety.</p>

Criteria	Assessment
<p>Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)</p>	<p>The LECP is a county-wide plan, but is intended to promote sustainable economic and community development in general within the county, as opposed to comprising a spatial land-use plan. The LECP does not zone additional lands, and any projects referenced in the Plan with regard to particular areas will be subject to the statutory planning and environmental framework and higher level plans, including the County Development Plan.</p>
<p>Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</li> <li>▪ Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</li> <li>▪ Intensive land-use</li> </ul>	<p>Co. Longford contains areas of special natural characteristics and cultural heritage. Implementation of the objectives and actions in the LECP will have no impact on these areas, as all actions will be carried out in compliance with the County Development Plan. An Appropriate Assessment screening of the Draft LECP has been carried out (see accompanying AA Screening Document), and concluded that implementation of the Plan does not have the potential to give rise to impacts on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)</p> <p>The Plan does not set the framework for any specific projects or activities that will result in the exceedance of environmental quality standards/limit values, or affect any areas of intensive land-use. The framework for such projects is set by higher-tier land-use plans, including the County Development Plan, which has been subject to SEA and AA to ensure the integration of environmental considerations into its preparation.</p>
<p>Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, EU or international protection status</p>	<p>Implementation of the LECP will have no effect on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, EU or international protection status. The Appropriate Assessment screening of the Draft LECP concludes that implementation of the Plan does not have the potential to result in impacts on any European sites or to influence other plans or projects in a manner that could potentially impact thereon.</p> <p>Any actions in the LECP that result in the development of new projects must be carried out in compliance with the statutory planning framework and higher level plans, including the County Development Plan, which has been subject to SEA and AA.</p>

In assessing the Draft LECP against the required environmental criteria, it was determined that the Plan does not require full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The actions set out in the LECP are consistent with the Core Strategy of the Longford County Development Plan 2015 – 2021. The LECP actions will be implemented in accordance with the relevant statutory planning and environmental legislation and higher level plans, including the County Development Plan. All LECP actions will be

required to comply with the County Development Plan policies and objectives, including those on Industrial, Commercial and Business Development, Transportation, Energy, and Natural Heritage and Biodiversity.

### **3.3 Summary**

Screening of the Longford Draft LECP 2016 – 2022 identified that implementation of the Plan will not have significant effects on the environment and that SEA of the Draft Plan is not required, as per the following findings:

- The Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- The Plan does not have the potential to result in impacts on any European sites or to influence other plans or projects in a manner that could potentially impact thereon, and therefore does not require a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive; and
- The Plan does not meet Schedule 2A criteria for plans or programmes likely to have significant environmental effects.

## 4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, having assessed the objectives and actions of the Longford Draft Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022, none meet the criteria that set the threshold for the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment as listed below. The relevant criteria against which all proposed actions were assessed are set out in Section 3 of this document.

- The Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- The Plan does not have the potential to result in impacts on any European sites or to influence other plans or projects in a manner that could potentially impact thereon, and therefore does not require a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive; and
- The Plan does not meet Schedule 2A criteria for plans or programmes likely to have significant environmental effects.