

Ms Aoife Moore  
Planning Department  
Longford County Council  
Aras an Chontae  
Great Water Street  
Longford

5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Our Ref: 200801.2

**Re. SEA Screening for Proposed Variation 5 to the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021**

Dear Ms Moore,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020, in relation to the Proposed Variation No. 5 to the Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 (the 'Variation') and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

The EPA is one of the statutory environmental authorities under the SEA Regulations. In our role as an SEA environmental authority, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Variation and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the Variation. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via our guidance document '[SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources](#)'. This document is updated regularly and sets out our key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use plans. In finalising your SEA screening determination, we suggest that you take this guidance document into account and incorporate the relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the Variation.

### **Proposed SEA Determination**

We note your proposed determination regarding the need for SEA of the Variation, that SEA is not required for the Variation.

### **Sustainable Development**

In proposing and in implementing the Variation, Longford County Council should ensure that the Variation is consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development. Adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the Plan.

In considering the Variation, Longford County Council should take into account the need to align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as incorporating any relevant recommendations in sectoral, regional and local climate adaptation plans.

Longford County Council should also ensure that the Variation aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

### **State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2016**

In preparing the Variation and associated SEA screening, the recommendations, key issues and challenges described in our State of the Environment Report [Ireland’s Environment – An Assessment 2016](#) (EPA, 2016) should be considered, as relevant and appropriate to the Variation. The next iteration of this ‘State of the Report’ series is due to be published this month. Once published we recommend that you should take this into account in finalising and implementing the Variation.

### **Available Guidance & Resources**

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

- SEA process guidance and checklists
- Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA
- topic specific SEA guidance (including *Good practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment* (EPA, 2020), *Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring* (EPA, 2020), *Integrating climatic factors into SEA* (EPA, 2019), *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA* (EPA, 2015), and *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2012))

You can access these resources at: [www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/sea/](http://www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/sea/)

### ***Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) WebTool***

This new tool was launched recently by the EPA. It is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. It is available at [www.enviromap.ie](http://www.enviromap.ie). The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners examine environmental considerations, anticipate potential land-use conflicts, and help identify suitable development locations while also protecting the environment.

### ***EPA SEA WebGIS Tool***

Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now publicly available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA>. It allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

### ***EPA WFD Application***

Our WFD Application provides access to water quality and catchment data from the national WFD monitoring programme. The Application is accessed through EDEN <https://wfd.edenireland.ie/> and is available to public agencies. Publicly available data can be accessed via the [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie) website.

### **Future amendments to the Plan**

Where changes to the Variation are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the Plan are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).

### **Appropriate Assessment**

You should ensure that the Variation complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant. Where Appropriate Assessment is required, the key findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the Variation.

### ***EPA AA GeoTool***

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <http://www.epa.ie/terminalfour/PropAssess/index.jsp>

### **Environmental Authorities**

Under the SEA Regulations, prior to making your SEA determination you should also consult with:

- The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, where it appears to you as the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment,
- any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.

### **SEA Determination**

As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, as appropriate, the reasons for

not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website. You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: [sea@epa.ie](mailto:sea@epa.ie).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cian O'Mahony'.

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Cian O'Mahony  
*SEA Section*  
*Office of Evidence and Assessment*