

Ms Karen Burke  
Senior Executive Planner  
Forward Planning  
Economic Development & Enterprise Directorate  
Limerick City & County Council  
Merchants Quay  
Limerick V94 EH90

17th November 2022

Our Ref: 221102.2

**Re. SEA Screening for the Proposed Material Alterations to the Draft Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029**

Dear Ms Burke,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022, in relation to the Proposed Material Alterations (the 'Alterations') to the Draft Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (the 'Plan') 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 Plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

**SEA Determination**

We note your determination that SEA is not required for the Alterations. 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 implementing the Alterations, we suggest that you take this guidance document into account and incorporate the relevant recommendations, if and where, relevant and appropriate to the Alterations.

### **Sustainable Development**

In proposing and in implementing the Alterations, Limerick City & County Council should ensure that the Alterations are 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, as amended.

In considering the Alterations, Limerick City & 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.

Limerick City & County Council should also ensure that the Alterations align 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 Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

### ***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 Plan 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).

### ***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: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>.

### **Environmental Authorities**

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

- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; and
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- 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 black ink that reads 'David Galvin'.

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David Galvin  
*SEA Section*  
*Office of Evidence and Assessment*