

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

of the

**Draft Cork City Local Economic and Community Plan
(LECP) 2016 - 2021**

20th May 2016



**Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council**

1. Introduction

The passing into law of the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* necessitated a number of changes to the administration of local government in Ireland including the requirement that Local Authorities must prepare an integrated Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), comprising specific economic and community elements, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. The LECP provides a service delivery planning framework over a six-year period.

This LECP will drive a series of actions to progress communities and stimulate economic development at a local level; focussing on

- Stakeholder Driven Actions that guide and inform the work of plans that operate at a more strategic level (national, regional, metropolitan, and gateway)
- Local Level Actions that support the implementation of existing and future stakeholder strategies influencing the development of Cork City at local level
- GAP Actions that identify inter agency gaps in the economic and community development of the city

The plan is very much based on a multi-agency approach that will require both cross-sector input and cross sector ownership.

While this plan recognises and reflects the importance of spatial development, it is not a spatial development plan. The forthcoming National Planning Framework (NPF), the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the existing Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 will provide the strategic guidance for sustainable land use planning for the city.

Under the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/ 42/ EC), Cork City Council is required to carry out an environmental assessment for certain plans and programmes, including the Cork City Local Economic and Community Plan.

The requirements for SEA in Ireland are set out in the national regulations, S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 and S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 respectively.

The Regulations 2004-2011 require case by case screening of individual plans and programmes based on the criteria in Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. These criteria must be taken into account in determining whether or not significant effects on the environment would be likely to arise.

2. Pre-Screening

Following a pre-screening exercise it is apparent that further detailed screening of the draft LECP is needed to determine if a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. The draft LECP will provide a framework for development, therefore it is necessary to test it against the Environmental Significance Screening Criteria as set out in the Directive.

3. Environmental Significance Screening

The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required for small Plans/Policies or modifications to Plans/Policies.

This section assesses the likelihood of significant effects to the environment as a result of implementing the draft LECP taking account of the statutory criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive (and Schedule 1 of SI no. 435 of 2004 European Communities (environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004.

Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Environmental Effects

Characteristics of the Plan

(i) 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;

It is the purpose of the Cork City Local Economic and Community Plan to set out for a six year period the objectives and actions needed to promote and support economic and community development in Cork City. It is intended that the LECP will facilitate both the expanding economic role and the emerging development role of Local Government and bring about better alignment of the work of Local Development Companies with that of the Local Authority and other providers of social, community and economic development thereby achieving better returns for the communities they serve.

The LECP is required to complement and demonstrate consistency with existing statutory policies including the South West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 and the Cork City Development Plan 2015 - 2021 and the forthcoming National Planning Framework (to replace the National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020). These plans are subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment.

To ensure consistency with the SEA process already undertaken for the City Development Plan, the LECP will at all times refer to the City Development Plan in relation to spatial and land-use matters.

The implementation of the LECP will be consistent with the Core Strategy and Objectives of the City Development Plan as the lead policy document for spatial and land-use issues. The LECP will complement the City Development Plan.

(ii) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;

The Local Economic and Community Plan is a statutory plan set within the context of the policy document “Putting People First” and the “Local Government Reform Act 2014.”

The LECP is a local plan set within a hierarchy of national, regional and local plans and strategies. The LECP is required to complement and demonstrate consistency with the South West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 and the Cork City Development Plan 2015 - 2021.

At a local level, the LECP provides a framework for all organisations to link their own strategies and plans and to combine investment and resource to achieve common agreed goals. Those preparing and implementing these operational plans will need to be conscious of the agreed priorities for the area as set out in the Plan, and their roles in addressing these. The LECP is about solving problems, realising opportunities and collectively refocusing service provision. The LECP can only be achieved by all local agencies and organisations working in partnership.

While the LECP is a strongly action focused plan, it is not an operational plan, nor a spatial land use plan. The priorities which will be implemented through operational plans have been identified on an analysis of existing national, regional and local strategies, socio-economic data and public consultations.

The LECP will forge a stronger link between spatial planning and economic development and will complement the planning policy framework and be consistent with the provisions of the City Development Plan and Planning Guidance.

(iii) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;

The LECP is consistent with the objectives of the City Development Plan which was subject to SEA. The integration of the SEA assessment in the plan making process allowed for environmental issues and subsequently environmental protection measures and objectives to be incorporated into the plan.

The integration of sustainable development principles and objectives into the actions of the LECP will be an important opportunity to implement same.

(iv) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;

The actions of the LECP will be implemented within the spatial framework, core strategy and environmental protection objectives of the City Development Plan and thus should not give rise to significant strategic environmental issues.

The CDP and the LECP have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening, (under the Habitats Directive) and as such should not give rise to adverse impacts to the receiving environment.

(v) 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).

The LECP must be consistent with existing national and regional policy documents which include policies relating to environmental protection, water supply, water quality, ground water, waste management, landscape and cultural heritage in compliance with EU legislation and directives such as the Water Framework Directive and the Flood Directive.

Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected

(i) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The LECP period is 6 years, 2016 - 2021. The effects of the LECP will be addressed under the existing statutory planning framework including the City Development Plan and associated environmental assessments. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects are not significant.

(ii) The cumulative nature of the effects

The key objective of the LECP is to promote economic, local and community development within a framework of the City Development Plan. A guiding principle is sustainability,

promoting a more resource efficient, green and inclusive society and economy. Increased economic development is expected but without adverse environmental effects as the selected development scenario (strategy) and the environmental protection objectives of the City Development Plan, mitigates same. Community development should not result in adverse impacts as it is more about stakeholder actions and relationships than spatial planning.

(iii) The transboundary nature of the effects

No transboundary effects are predicted.

(iv) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)

No risks to human health. The LECP being consistent with the City Development Plan including policies relating to the safe supply of clean water, protection of water quality through appropriate wastewater treatment, flood risk management, air quality, light pollution, noise pollution, major accident hazards ('Seveso'), Cork airport safety zones, etc. it should result in positive impacts on human health, employment, community development and environmental quality.

(v) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The area affected is the Cork City administrative area, with a population approx. 119,000 persons. The LECP being consistent with the selected development strategy/ Core Strategy of the City Development Plan will not result in any significant adverse impacts on the receiving environment.

(vi) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to

i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;

A strategic goal of the City Development Plan is to "maintain and capitalise on Cork's unique form and character," and seeks to protect the natural and built heritage of the city through the objectives set out in 'Chapter 9 Built Heritage and Archaeology and the Specific Built Heritage Objectives set out in Volume 3. The LECP being consistent with the City Development Plan will comply with these objectives.

ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;

It is not expected that any environmental quality standards will be exceeded or that the value of vulnerable areas limited as a result of the LECP as it is consistent with the environmental protection policies and objectives of the City Development Plan.

iii) intensive land-use;

LECP projects that constitute development (under legislation) will be required to comply with the hierarchy of national, regional and local plans including the City Development Plan which sets out an integrated transport and land-use development strategy focussing on key development areas, mainly 'brownfield' sites.

vii) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

Cork Lough Natural Heritage Area is located within the city, Cork Harbour Special Protection Area, (SPA) made up of the Dunkettle Shore NHA, Douglas River Estuary NHA, and Lee Valley NHA is partially located within the city boundary. Sites of Geological Interest within the city include, St. Joseph's, (Lee Road) and the Blackrock Quarry site, (South Docks), proposed Natura Heritage Areas. The plan is unlikely to have any effect on any such designated areas or landscapes. In terms of a spatial perspective, the LECP is consistent with and complemented by the City Development Plan which includes important mitigation through Appropriate Assessment Screening to ensure there is no significant effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

4. Conclusion

Following the environmental significance screening process, the LECP is not considered likely to have significant effects on the environment and, therefore, an SEA is not required.

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