

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCOPING REPORT

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FOR THE

## DRAFT WEXFORD TOWN LOCAL AREA PLAN 2024-2030

**for: Wexford County Council**

County Hall  
Carricklawn  
County Wexford



**by: CAAS Ltd.**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
24-26 Ormond Quay Upper  
Dublin 7



**AUGUST 2023**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

Wexford County Council intends to prepare a new Wexford Town Local Area Plan (LAP) 2024-2030 under Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Plan will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Plan area over the years 2024-2030.

Under the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011, (S.I. No. 201 of 2011), there is a requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of all Local Area Plans for areas that have a population or target population of 5,000 persons or more. Wexford Town has a population exceeding this threshold, therefore SEA is required as a part of the Plan-making process.

It is intended that this SEA Scoping Report will, alongside ongoing data collection and the SEA Scoping submissions made by environmental authorities, inform the preparation of the SEA (see Section 1.3.5). The SEA Scoping Report will help communicate and define the scope of the environmental issues which are to be dealt with by the SEA together with the level of detail to which it is intended to address these issues, as per the SEA Guidelines<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 Overview of the Plan-preparation/SEA/AA/SFRA Processes

Figure 1 provides an overview of the integrated Plan-preparation, SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA)<sup>2</sup> and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)<sup>3</sup> processes. The preparation of the Draft Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA are taking place concurrently and the findings of the SEA, AA and SFRA will inform the Draft Plan.

Considering the scope detailed in the SEA Scoping Report, environmental impacts will be predicted, evaluated and mitigated. The findings of the assessment will be presented in an SEA Environmental Report which will accompany the Draft Plan on public display as part of the required statutory public consultation. The findings of both the AA and SFRA will be also integrated into the SEA Environmental Report. AA and SFRA documents will also accompany the Draft Plan on public display. The SEA will follow elements of Integrated Biodiversity Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

Submissions received following public consultation on the Draft Plan and associated documents will be responded to in a Chief Executive's report, with updates made to the SEA and AA documentation where relevant.

Material Alterations, where proposed, will be screened for the need to undergo SEA and AA and full, detailed assessments will be undertaken where required. The SEA and AA documents would accompany the Proposed Material Alterations, if made, on public display. Submissions from that round of public consultations, if needed, would be responded to in a Chief Executive's report on public consultation, with updates made to the SEA and AA documentation where relevant.

Any proposed modifications would be examined to ensure that they would not be likely to affect the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites and to ensure that they would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

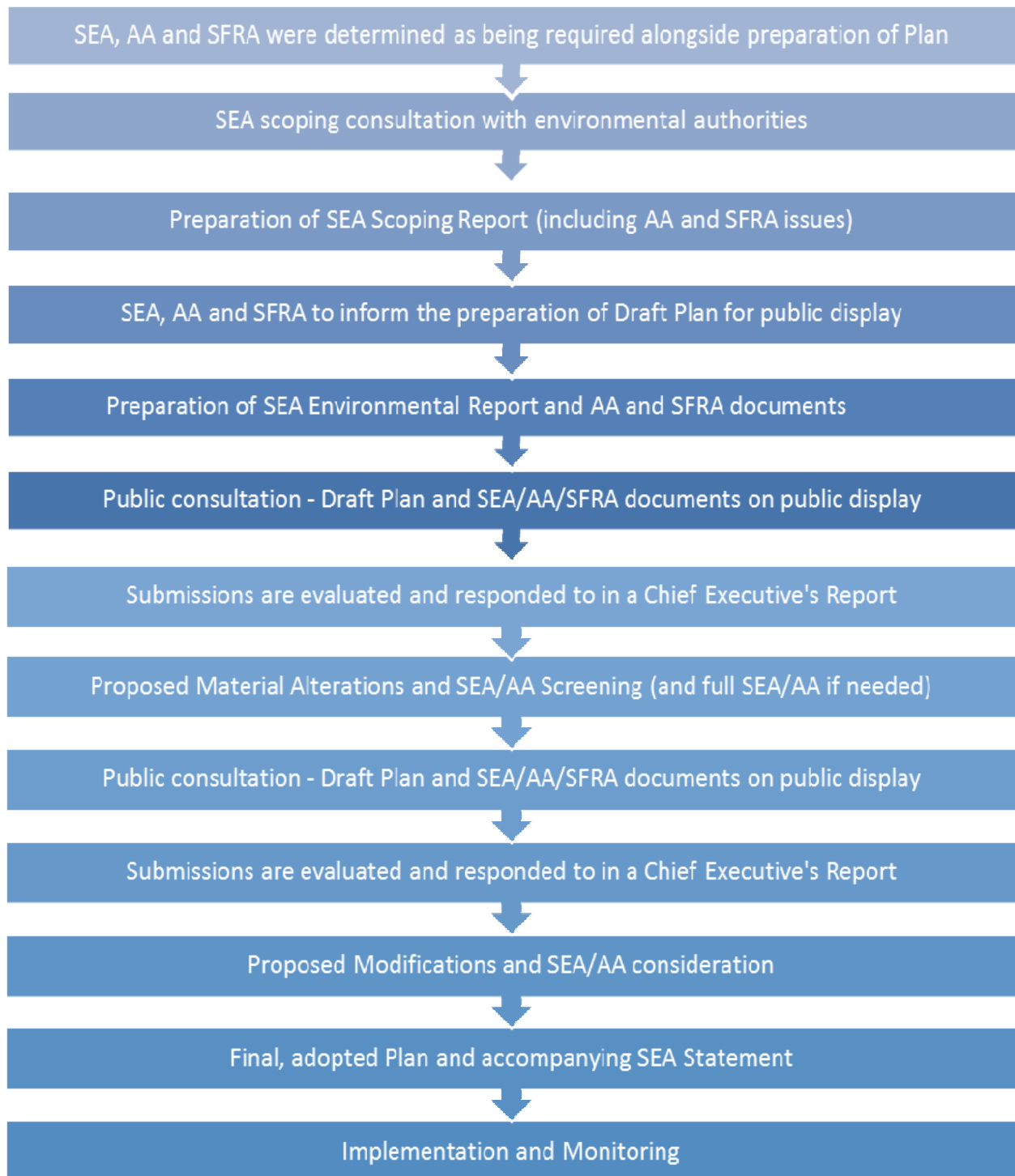
<sup>1</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action or project, alone and in combination with other plans/programmes/etc., on the integrity of a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

<sup>3</sup> SFRA is an area-wide examination of the risks of flooding to support spatial planning decisions such as the zoning of particular areas for development.

<sup>4</sup> As detailed in the EPA's (2013) *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual*.

When the Plan is adopted, the SEA, AA and SFRA documents will be finalised and an SEA Statement, which will include information on how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan, will be prepared. The Plan will be implemented and environmental monitoring will be undertaken.



**Figure 1 Overview of the SEA Process in the Review and Preparation of the Local Area Plan (including AA and SFRA processes)**

## **1.3 Process Detail**

### **1.3.1 Legislative Context for SEA**

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 June 2001, on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, referred to hereafter as the SEA Directive, introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes which are prepared for several sectors, including land use planning.

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (Statutory Instrument Number (S.I. No. 435 of 2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004). Both sets of Regulations became operational on 21 July 2004. The Regulations have been amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011).

### **1.3.2 Appropriate Assessment**

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), and possibly subsequent stages of assessment, will be undertaken on the Draft Plan. AA is an impact assessment process concerning European sites (which collectively comprise the Natura 2000 network) - these sites have been designated or proposed for designation by virtue of their ecological importance. The Habitats Directive<sup>5</sup> requires, inter alia, that plans and programmes undergo an AA process to establish the likely or potential effects on the integrity of European sites arising from implementation of the Plan. If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant or uncertain then the Plan must undergo Stage 2 AA.

Submissions/parts of submissions on AA made during the SEA Scoping process will be considered while undertaking the AA as relevant.

### **1.3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) will also be undertaken alongside the Draft Plan, identifying and assessing flood risk to inform the content of the Plan including policies, objectives and land use zoning.

The requirement for SFRA is provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009) and '*Circular PL2/2014: Flood Guidelines*' (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2014).

### **1.3.4 Outcomes of the SEA and AA Processes**

The SEA and AA processes will facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into the Draft Plan. It is intended that these considerations will include the following:

- Policies and objectives contributing towards environmental protection and management and the sustainable development; and
- Integration of environmental considerations into the land use zoning included as part of the Draft Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

### 1.3.5 SEA scoping consultations with environmental authorities

As part of the SEA scoping process, environmental authorities<sup>6</sup> specified under the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, were notified that a submission or observation in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made to the Council.

Considering the content of the SEA Scoping Report and the submissions received from the environmental authorities, an SEA Environmental Report will be prepared that will accompany the Draft Plan on public display.

Detailed submissions were received from the following:

- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; and
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The issues raised in these submissions and associated SEA responses are detailed on Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1.1 SEA Scoping Submissions and Responses**

No.	Submission text/Summary	Response
<b>1</b>	<b>Submission from Environmental Protection Agency</b>	
<b>A</b>	We acknowledge your notice, dated 30th June 2023 in relation to the Wexford Town Local Area Plan 2024-2030 the 'Plan'.	Noted.
<b>B</b>	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.	Noted.
<b>C</b>	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 the 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. We recommend that you take this guidance document into account in preparing the Plan and SEA.	The 'SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources' document has been considered in the preparation of this SEA Scoping Report and will be kept on file for reference throughout the SEA process.
<b>D</b>	In preparing the Plan, Wexford County Council should also ensure that the Plan 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 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.	The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan 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 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.
<b>E</b>	The EPA may provide additional comments upon receipt of the SEA Environmental Report and Draft Plan/Programme/Variation at the next stage of the SEA process.	Noted.

<sup>6</sup> The following authorities were notified: Environmental Protection Agency; Department of Environment, Climate and Communications; Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Carlow County Council; Kilkenny County Council; Waterford County Council; and Wicklow County Council.

No.	Submission text/Summary	Response
<b>F</b>	<p>Available Guidance &amp; Resources</p> <p>Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SEA process guidance and checklists</li> <li>- Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA</li> <li>- 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))</li> </ul> <p>You can access these guidance notes and other resources at: <a href="https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-topic-and-sector-specific-guidance/">https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/sea-topic-and-sector-specific-guidance/</a></p>	<p>These resources and guidance have been considered in the preparation of this SEA Scoping Report and will be accessed, as relevant, for reference throughout the SEA process.</p>
<b>G</b>	<p>Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool</p> <p>The ESM Webtool is a decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to explore environmental considerations within a particular area and create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners anticipate potential land-use conflicts and help identify suitable development locations, while also protecting the environment. The ESM Webtool is available at <a href="http://www.enviromap.ie">www.enviromap.ie</a>.</p>	<p>The ESM Webtool has been considered in the preparation of this report and will be considered throughout the SEA process, where relevant.</p>
<b>H</b>	<p>EPA SEA GIS Search and Reporting Webtool</p> <p>Our SEA GIS Search and Reporting Webtool is publicly available through EPA Maps at <a href="https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA">https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA</a>. 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.</p>	<p>Available online EPA resources, including mapping resources, have been considered in the preparation of this report and will be considered throughout the SEA and AA processes.</p>
<b>I</b>	<p>Catchments.ie</p> <p>Our <a href="https://www.catchments.ie/maps/">https://www.catchments.ie/maps/</a> website provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the National WFD monitoring programme.</p>	
<b>J</b>	<p>EPA AA GeoTool</p> <p>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 also available through EPA <a href="https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool">https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool</a>.</p>	
<b>K</b>	<p>State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2020</p> <p>In preparing the Plan and SEA, the recommendations, key issues and challenges described within our State of the Environment Report Ireland’s Environment – An Assessment 2020 (EPA, 2020) should be considered, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan. This should also be taken into account, in preparing the Plan and SEA.</p>	<p>The recommendations, key issues and challenges described within the current version of Ireland’s Environment will be considered in the preparation of the Plan and SEA.</p>
<b>L</b>	<p>Transition to a low carbon climate resilient economy and society</p> <p>You should ensure that the Plan aligns with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaptation plans.</p>	<p>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan aligns with national commitments on climate change and adaptation, as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaptation plans.</p>
<b>M</b>	<p>Environmental Authorities</p> <p>Under the SEA Regulations, you should consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Protection Agency;</li> <li>• Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;</li> <li>• Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; and</li> <li>• Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.</li> </ul> <p>• 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.</p>	<p>Notice has been given to relevant environmental authorities as part of the SEA scoping process.</p>
<b>N</b>	<p>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: <a href="mailto:sea@epa.ie">sea@epa.ie</a>.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</b>	
<b>A</b>	<p>Archaeology</p> <p>All objectives and development control measures relating to the archaeological heritage included in the current Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 (including Chapter 13, AH01-AH13) shall be reflected in the Wexford Local Area Plan to ensure sustainable development and the continued protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage.</p>	<p>The SEA will recommend reference to County Development Plan provisions in the Local Area Plan.</p>

No.	Submission text/Summary	Response
<b>B</b>	<p>All references in the Wexford Local Area Plan to the relevant Government Department responsible for the protection of the archaeological heritage in the Local Area Plan should read "Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage" as the National Monuments Service is currently part of that particular Government Department. The formulation and implementation of policy relating to the protection of Ireland's archaeological heritage is the responsibility of the National Monuments Service (NMS). The archaeological heritage is discussed in Section 3.8.1 of the SEA Draft Scoping Report. In addition to the information already referenced, it would be useful to include details of the following additional resources available to ensure the preparation of an informed Local Area Plan and the continued protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage within the planning area.</p> <p>The National Monuments Service (NMS) recommends that the content of the Record of Monuments &amp; Places for the planning area covered by the Wexford Local Area Plan be included, perhaps as an appendix to the plan - including the link to the legal RMP documents at <a href="http://www.archaeology.ie">www.archaeology.ie</a>. It should also be made clear that additional archaeological sites and monuments have been identified by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, NMS, in the Historic Environment Viewer (HEV), which is also available at <a href="http://www.archaeology.ie">www.archaeology.ie</a>. Similar provision within the Wexford Local Area Plan is recommended in relation to historic wrecks that are included in the Historic Wreck Viewer (<a href="http://www.archaeology.ie">www.archaeology.ie</a>). The HEV is continuously updated by the Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage.</p> <p>Historic Towns likely to contain subsurface archaeological deposits associated with their early settlement, or the incorporation of early features in what are considered to later/modern structures, have also been identified and included in the RMP. The RMP maps identify these Historic Towns and has de-lined a 'Zone of Archaeological Potential' (ZAP) around each town, including Wexford, within which archaeological features/structures/sub-surface deposits are likely to be present. The availability of this mapping in the Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage should be referenced in the development plan.</p> <p>It should be noted in the Local Area Plan that in addition to planning permission, development works at National Monuments of which the Minister or local authority is owner of, guardian of or in respect of which a preservation order is in force, may also require Ministerial Consent under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) and this will be determined by the relevant authority (Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage) on application.</p> <p>Development Control: When drafting the Wexford Local Area Plan, it will be important to take cognisance of the OPR (Office of the Planning Regulator) Practice Note (PN03) which was recently published in October 2022 and is available to view/download on the OPR website here: <a href="https://www.opr.ie/planning-practice/">https://www.opr.ie/planning-practice/</a></p> <p>The overall purpose of this practice note is to promote greater consistency, insofar as is practical, in the use of standard planning conditions, and to support planning authorities in devising their own manual of sample conditions. The Practice Note contains information and guidance for planning authorities on the drafting of standard planning conditions and the reasons for the attachment of conditions to a grant of planning permission. It also includes Sample Archaeology Conditions and an NMS Explanatory Note and Glossary of Terms to accompany the Sample Archaeology Conditions.</p> <p>Community Archaeology: It would be useful and informative to include reference in the Wexford Local Area Plan to the potential for obtaining funding for community-based archaeological projects from the recently established 'Community Monuments Fund' which is currently administered by the National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage. See link for further details: <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bd7d6-community-monuments-fund-2023-call-forprojects/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bd7d6-community-monuments-fund-2023-call-forprojects/</a></p>	<p>Noted. Reference to the resources available from the National Monuments Service in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will be added to Section 3.8.1 of this SEA Scoping Report.</p> <p>Both the Plan and the SEA Environmental Report will include relevant information on cultural heritage, including that related to archaeology.</p> <p>The SEA will recommend reference to County Development Plan provisions in the Local Area Plan. Additional measures relating to cultural heritage, including archaeology, will be added as relevant.</p>
<b>C</b>	<p>You are requested to send further communications to this Department's Development Applications Unit (DAU) at <a href="mailto:referrals@housing.gov.ie">referrals@housing.gov.ie</a> where used, or to the following address: The Manager, Development Applications Unit (DAU), Government Offices, Newtown Road, Wexford, Y35 AP90</p>	Noted.
<b>3</b>	<b>Submission from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine</b>	
<b>A</b>	<p>The Department acknowledged receipt of the SEA Scoping Report and had no observations or submissions to make on the report at this time.</p>	Noted.



## Section 2 Details on the Likely Content of the Draft Plan

The Draft Wexford Town Local Area Plan 2024-2030 will be prepared over the coming months. The Plan will provide a six-year framework for the sustainable development of Wexford Town, while considering the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. It will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town in terms of its social, cultural, economic and physical development and will consist of a written statement supported by mapping and other appendices indicating the development objectives for Wexford Town. The Plan area is indicated on Figure 1 below.

The Plan will include land use zoning and specific objectives, and provisions relating to the Council's own developments. It will include and be informed by a number of strategies including a Local Transport Plan, Nature-Based Solutions/Rainwater Management Plan and Urban Design/Masterplanning. Land use zoning will be informed by an Infrastructure Assessment Report.

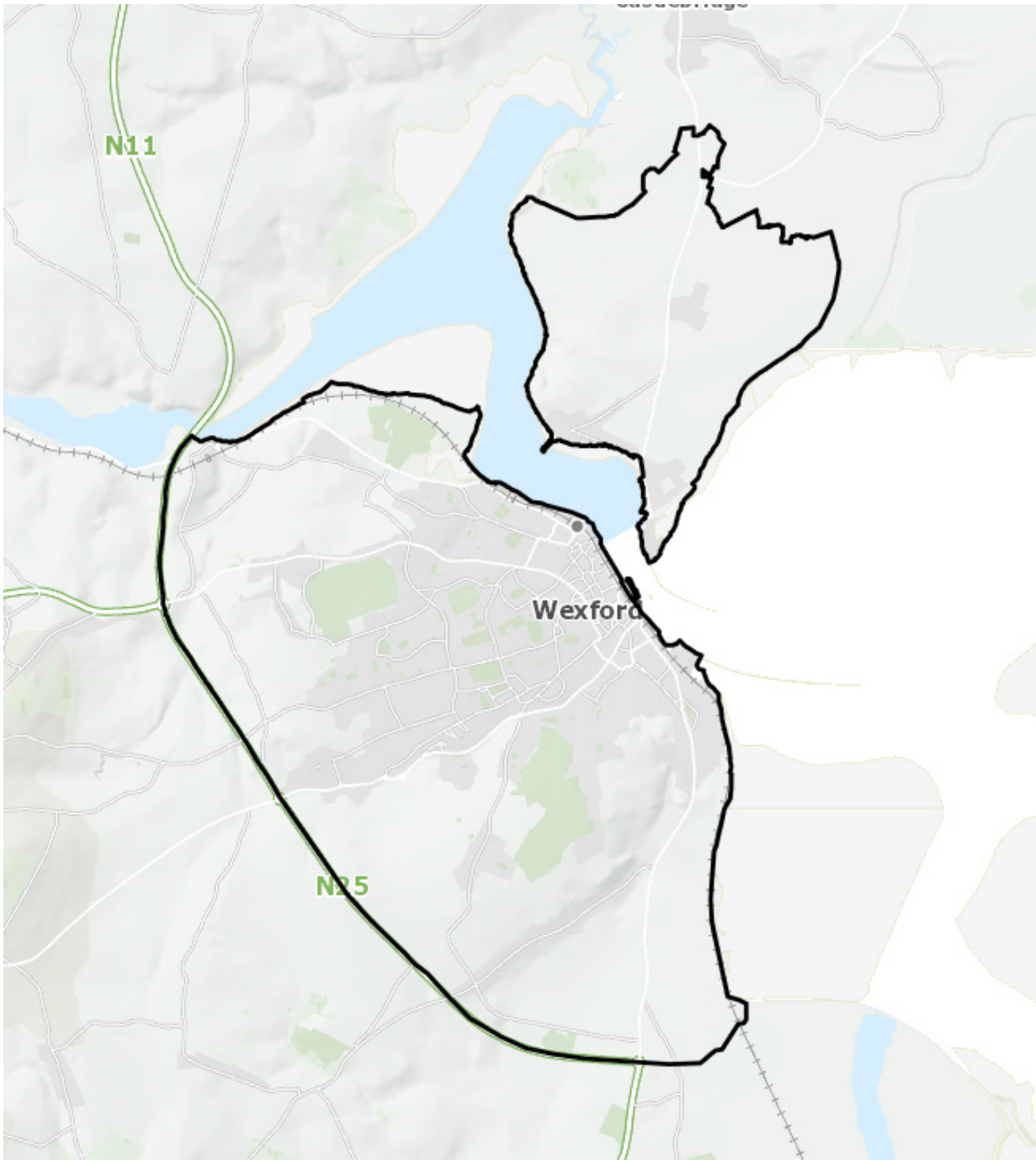
The preparation of the Plan will be informed by a process of public participation and consultation. The Plan represents an important policy document that will form the foundations to support and facilitate new housing, sustainable transport systems, infrastructure developments, economic development and social, community and educational facilities, while at the same time protecting natural and built heritage.

The Plan will be guided by the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. Wexford is identified as a "Key Town" in the County Development Plan. The "Key Town" serves as an economic function that offers employment opportunities and services for the surrounding areas and wider sub regional catchment. Census 2016 recorded a population of 20,188 persons in Wexford Town. The Core Strategy in the County Plan provides for a population increase of 5,855 persons for Wexford Town by 2027. The County Plan outlines strategic objectives for the development of the town, including the following, which will guide the likely scale, nature and location of development within the area during the lifetime of the plan in broad terms:

- Objective WT01 To strengthen the role of Wexford Town as a self-sustaining regional economic driver located on the Eastern Economic Corridor by leveraging this strategic location and accessibility to Rosslare Europort and building upon its inherent strengths including digital connectivity, skills, innovation and enterprise, tourism, culture and retail services.
- Objective WT02 To support the development of the Wexford Campus as part of the multi-campus South East Technological University, and facilitate all associated services including student accommodation and recreational facilities.
- Objective WT03 To ensure that the local transport plan prepared provides the framework to integrate land use, accessibility requirements and transportation, prioritise sustainable transport modes including walking, cycling and public transport and identifies the necessary infrastructure required to facilitate implementation.
- Objective WT04 To promote and support the development of the Trinity Wharf lands as a Strategic Employment Location and the redevelopment of the Commercial Quay redevelopment area as a Strategic Tourism Employment Location.
- Objective WT05 To develop industrial, commercial, infrastructure and residential development in Wexford Town to support the port function at Rosslare Europort.
- Objective WT06 To support the development of additional capacity at Rosslare Europort and the provision of rail freight services and facilities to support sustainable increases in port operations.
- Objective WT07 To support the development of tourism projects in the town including those associated with the town's new Maritime brand such as the planned marina at Trinity Wharf, the Commercial Quay Redevelopment Area and the potential Wexford to Rosslare Greenway, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and the proper planning and sustainable development of the town.
- Objective WT08 To support the delivery of the infrastructural requirements which would benefit the key town role including improved road infrastructure such the M11/M25 Oilgate to Rosslare

Harbour Scheme and upgrading of the N30 and N80, enhanced rail infrastructure and services, improved digital connectivity, upgrading and development of water supply and additional investment in wastewater infrastructure to support the economic development and anticipated growth of the town.

- Objective WT09 To support the delivery of infrastructural requirements to allow Wexford Town keep pace with the planned population and economic growth. These requirements include education and the prioritisation of additional primary and post primary school places in order to address existing and future demand and the provision of additional social, cultural and amenity facilities including the new Min Ryan Park and the redevelopment of Wexford Arts Centre.
- Objective WT10 To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the town through the regeneration and revitalisation of key locations such as the Trinity Wharf lands, the Crescent Quay Public Realm Enhancement project and public realm works on Monck Street and the Commercial Quay Redevelopment Area.



**Figure 2 Area to which the Plan will relate**

## Section 3 Scope of environmental baseline data to be used in the assessment

### 3.1 Introduction

The SEA Environmental Report that will accompany the Draft Plan on public display will include information on the state of the environment within and surrounding Wexford Town, including maps of individual environmental components, environmental sensitivity mapping and a description under the topics identified by the SEA Directive (biodiversity and flora and fauna, population and human health, soil; water, air and climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape and the interrelationships between these topics) and transposing regulations. The SEA Environmental Report will consider the zone of influence for the Plan and will include baseline information beyond the Plan boundary as relevant.

### 3.2 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

The SEA will consider available information on designated ecological sites and protected species<sup>7</sup>, ecological connectivity (including stepping stones and corridors) and non-designated habitats. The SEA will also identify data sources which may be appropriate to local, project-level development and assessments.

Key ecological sensitivities within and surrounding the Plan area include those relating to:

- **Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation** located partially within the Plan area. Sensitive features of this site include: estuaries; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculus fluitans* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*; freshwater pearl mussel; sea lamprey; brook lamprey; river lamprey; twaite shad; salmon; otter; and harbour seal.
- **Wexford Harbour and Slobs Special Protection Area**, located partially within the Plan area. Sensitive features include little grebe; great crested grebe; cormorant; grey heron; Beswick's swan; whooper swan; light-bellied brent goose; shelduck; wigeon; teal; mallard; pintail; scaup; goldeneye; red-breasted merganser; hen harrier; coot; oystercatcher; golden plover; grey plover; lawing; knot; sanderling; dunlin; black-tailed godwit; bar-tailed godwit; curlew; redshank; black-headed gull; lesser black-backed gull; little tern; Greenland white-fronted goose; and wetland and waterbirds.
- **Slaney River Valley proposed Natural Heritage Area and Wexford Harbour and Slobs proposed Natural Heritage Area located partially within the Plan area.**
- **Other designated sites** surrounding the Plan area, including:
  - **Raven Point Nature Reserve Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area**, located c. 4.5 km to the north-east of the Plan area;
  - **Screen Hills Special Area of Conservation and proposed Natural Heritage Area**, located c. 5.5 km to the north-east of the Plan area; and
  - **Forth Mountain proposed Natural Heritage Area**, located c. 4 km to the south-west of the Plan area.
- **Aquatic and riverine ecology associated with Rivers Slaney; Rathspick Stream; Coolree Stream; and Whitemill Stream**, including their tributaries and riparian buffer zones.
- **Locally important habitats within the Plan area**, including various woodlands, trees, parks, gardens, hedgerows, old buildings/stone walls, railway lines, pollinator sites and lands used for agriculture within and surrounding the Plan area, providing habitats for flora and fauna and facilitating linkages and corridors to the surrounding countryside for the wildlife.

<sup>7</sup> Protected species including: Annex IV (Habitats Directive) species of flora and fauna, and their key habitats (i.e. breeding sites and resting places), which are strictly protected wherever they occur, whether inside or outside the above sites, e.g. Otter and bats; Other species of flora and fauna and their key habitats which are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, wherever they occur; 'Protected species and natural habitats' as defined in the European Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) and European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations, 2008, including: Birds Directive – Annex I species and other regularly occurring migratory species, and their habitats (wherever they occur) and Habitats Directive – Annex I habitats, Annex II species and their habitats, and Annex IV species and their breeding sites and resting places (wherever they occur).

Information to be considered by the SEA under this topic include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)<sup>8</sup>;
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)<sup>9</sup>;
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)<sup>10</sup>;
- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)<sup>11</sup>;
- Nature Reserves<sup>12</sup>;
- Salmonid Waters<sup>13</sup>;
- Shellfish Waters<sup>14</sup>;
- Certain entries to the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas<sup>15</sup>;
- Trees, group of trees and woodlands;
- Wildfowl Sanctuaries<sup>16</sup>;
- RAMSAR Sites<sup>17</sup>;
- Tree Protection Order (TPO)<sup>18</sup>;
- CORINE Landcover<sup>19</sup>;

<sup>8</sup> SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. **There is one SAC designated within the Plan area (Slaney River SAC (Site Code: 000781) and several SACs designated within a 15 km buffer zone of the Plan area, including: Screen Hills SAC (Site Code: 000708); Long Bank SAC (Site Code: 002161); Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC (Site Code: 000710); Lady's Island Lake SAC (Site Code: 000704); Carnsore Point SAC (Site Code: 002269); Tacumshin Lake SAC (Site Code: 000709); Saltee Islands SAC (Site Code: 000707); Ballyteigue Burrow SAC (Site Code: 000696); and Bannow Bay SAC (Site Code: 000697).**

<sup>9</sup> SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the European Union. **There is one SPA designated within the Plan area (Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA (Site Code: 004076) and several SPAs designated within a 15 km buffer zone of the Plan area, including: The Raven SPA (Site Code: 004019); Lady's Island Lake SPA (Site Code: 004009); Tacumshin Lake SPA (Site Code: 004092); and Ballyteigue Burrow SPA (Site Code: 004020).**

<sup>10</sup> NHAs are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geomorphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. NHAs are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. **There are no NHAs designated within the Plan area or within a 15 km buffer zone of the Plan area.**

<sup>11</sup> pNHAs were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated. These sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats. **There is one pNHA partially designated within the Plan area (Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA, Site Code: 000712) and several pNHAs designated within 15 km buffer zone of the Plan area, including: Slaney River Valley pNHA (Site Code: 000781); Ballyconnigar Upper pNHA (Site Code: 000742); Ballyconnigar Sand Pits pNHA (Site Code: 000741); Ballyroe Fen and Lake pNHA (Site Code: 000747); Screen Hills pNHA (Site Code: 000708); Lady's Island Lake pNHA (Site Code: 000704); Tacumshin Lake pNHA (Site Code: 000709); Ballyteigue Burrow pNHA (Site Code: 000696); Forth Mountain pNHA (Site Code: 000761); Bannow Bay pNHA (Site Code: 000697); and St. Helen's Burrow pNHA (Site Code: 000782).**

<sup>12</sup> A Nature Reserve is an area of importance to wildlife, which is protected under Ministerial order. There are currently 78 Statutory Nature Reserves. Most are owned by the State but some are owned by organisations or private landowners. **The closest Nature Reserve to the Plan area is at Raven Point, c. 4.5 km to the north-east of the Plan area.**

<sup>13</sup> Salmonid waters are designated and protected as under the European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations 1988 (SI No. 293 of 1988). Designated Salmonid Waters are capable of supporting salmon (*Salmo salar*), trout (*Salmo trutta*), char (*Salvelinus*) and whitefish (*Coregonus*). **The River Slaney is partially designated for Salmonid River Regs (S.I. 293 only).**

<sup>14</sup> In order to protect existing shellfish waters and to ensure the future protection of these areas, the European Union introduced the Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC). The purpose of this Directive is to put in place concrete measures to protect waters, including shellfish waters, against pollution and to safeguard certain shellfish populations from various harmful consequences, resulting from the discharge of pollutant substances into the sea. The Directive applies to the aquatic habitat of bivalve and gastropod molluscs only (includes oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops and clams). It does not include crustaceans such as lobsters, crabs and crayfish. **Wexford Harbour Inner and Wexford Harbour Outer partially within the Plan area are designated as shellfish waters.**

<sup>15</sup> These areas are those identified as those requiring special protection under existing national or European legislation, either to protect their surface water or groundwater, or to conserve habitats or species that directly depend on those waters.

<sup>16</sup> Wildfowl Sanctuaries are areas that have been excluded from the 'Open Season Order' so that game birds can rest and feed undisturbed. There are 68 sanctuaries in the State. Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. **There is one Wildfowl Reserve adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the Plan area: Wexford Wildfowl Reserve and River Slaney (part).**

<sup>17</sup> Ramsar Sites are designated and protected under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Water Fowl Habitat, which was established at Ramsar in 1971 and ratified by Ireland in 1984. Ireland presently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with surface areas of 66,994 hectares. The objective of a Ramsar site is the conservation of wetlands for wildfowl. While Ireland ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1984 there is no legal backing for Ramsar sites unless they are also Nature Reserves or SPAs and as such are protected by the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000 or the Birds or Habitats Directives. **There are two Ramsar Sites adjacent to the Plan area to the north-east: Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (Site No. 291) and the Raven (Site No. 333).**

<sup>18</sup> TPOs are a planning mechanism whereby individual trees or groups of trees can be identified as important and protected by a TPO.

- Other sites of high biodiversity value or ecological importance<sup>20</sup>;
- Watercourses, wetlands and peatlands; and
- Ecological connectivity and networks including watercourses.

Potential overlaps in designations and zoning will be closely scrutinised by the SEA and AA.

The SEA will be informed by the findings of the AA (see Section 1.3.2) and will follow elements of Integrated Biodiversity Assessment with reference made to the EPA's 2013 *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual*.

### 3.3 Population and Human Health

Census 2016 has recorded a population of 20,188 persons in Wexford Town. The Core Strategy in the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 provides for a population increase of 5,855 persons for Wexford Town by 2027.<sup>21</sup>

Wexford is identified as a "Key Town" in the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. The "Key Town" serves as an economic function that offers employment opportunities and services for the surrounding areas and wider sub regional catchment.<sup>22</sup>

The new population provided for in the Draft Plan will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for wastewater treatment;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

The SEA will provide information on population trends within the Plan area.

Regarding human health, impacts relevant to the SEA are those which arise as a result of interactions with environmental vectors (i.e., environmental components such as air, including air quality and noise, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses, for example. Radon is also an issue which will be considered.

Major industrial accidents involving dangerous substances pose a significant threat to humans and the environment; such accidents can give rise to serious injury to human health or serious damage to the environment, both on and off the site of the accident. In Europe, a catastrophic accident in the Italian town of Seveso in 1976 prompted the adoption of legislation on the prevention and control of such accidents. The Seveso III (Directive 2012/18/EU) applies to more than 12,000 industrial establishments in the European Union where dangerous substances are used or stored in large quantities – such substances would have the potential to impact up the environment if not managed properly. One Seveso Site is identified within the Plan area, in the south, under the control of European Refreshments. Seveso Sites are categorised as Lower or Upper Tier establishments by the type and quantity of hazardous substances stored – this is an Upper Tier establishment. As a result, it must provide a written Safety Report to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and formulate an Internal Emergency Plan in consultation with local competent agencies. The local competent authorities must prepare an External Emergency Plan. Preparation of the Local Area Plan will have regard to the recent HSA Guidance on technical land-use planning advice.

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<sup>19</sup> Land cover is the observed physical cover, as seen from the ground or through remote sensing, including for example natural or planted vegetation, water and human constructions which cover the earth's surface.

<sup>20</sup> Including: **Wexford Harbour and Slob's Important Bird Area**; available habitats mapping at a suitable scale; trees; groups of trees and woodlands; pollinator sites; and hedgerows.

<sup>21</sup> Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. The Census 2022 data will be considered by the assessment once the results become available.

<sup>22</sup> Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

## 3.4 Soil

To date, there is no legislation which is specific to the protection of soil resources. However, the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 sets out a framework and concrete measures to protect and restore soils and ensure that they are used sustainably. It sets a vision and objectives to achieve healthy soils by 2050, with concrete actions by 2030. It also announced a future, new Soil Health Law to ensure a high-level of environmental and health protection.

Main soil types<sup>23</sup> surrounding the built-up areas of Wexford are: are surface water gleys (wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging), luvisol soils (generally fertile, widely used for agriculture and associated with significant accumulation of clay) and brown podzolic (dark brown humus-mineral soil covered with a thin mat of partly decayed leaves). Alluvial soils (associated with alluvial clay, silt or sand river deposits) and tidal marsh also occur within the Plan area. The SEA will examine issues including the loss of soils/soil sealing, as a result of greenfield development, and interactions with biodiversity and carbon storage.

Geological Survey Ireland coordinates the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, which seeks to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. County Geological Sites (CGSs) when audited, do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system. The audit of CGSs in County Wexford was completed in 2018, which identified 42 CGSs, there is one designated County Geological Site occurring within the Plan area, namely Wexford Harbour CGS (Site Code: WX043). Other County Geological Sites located nearby include: Curracloe Beach and The Raven Point (Site Code: WX016) located c.6 km to the east and north-east of the Plan area; Screen Hills (Site Code: WX036) located c.5 km to the north east of the Plan area; Shelmaliere Commons Quarry (Site Code: WX037) located c.4 km to the west of the Plan area; Forth Mountain (Site Code: WX018) located c.5 km to the south-west of the Plan area; and Mulmontry Gorge (Site Code: WX030) located c.10 km to the west of the Plan area.

Mapping and data from the Geological Survey Ireland, including Previous Landslide Events Mapping and Landslide Susceptibility Mapping, will be considered by the SEA.

## 3.5 Water

### 3.5.1 Water Status and Quality

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving *good status*. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to *good status*. Article 4 of the WFD sets out various exemptions for deterioration in status caused as a result of certain physical modifications to water bodies.

The SEA will use information from the EPA regarding surface water status, including that contained within Integrated Water Quality Reports. The status of rivers and streams (2016-2021) draining the Plan area is identified as being *good* (Muchwood\_010; Whitefort\_010; and sections of the River Sow: Sow\_040) and *moderate* (Rathaspick\_010; Assaly\_010; and Coolree Stream\_010). The status of transitional waters (2016-2021) draining the Plan area is identified as *poor* (Lower Slaney Estuary) and the status of coastal waters (2016-2021) draining the Plan area is identified as *good* (South-Western Irish Sea downstream of the Plan area) and *moderate* (Wexford Harbour downstream of the Plan area).

The SEA will also include information on groundwater status. The WFD groundwater status (2016-2021) underlying most of the Plan area is identified as being *good*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> All soil types belong to a Sub-Group and so in turn to one of the 11 soil Great Groups. Great Groups and Sub-Groups are a hierarchical arrangement of soils used for taxonomical classification (<http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/soilguide.php>).

<sup>24</sup> Except for the area of *poor* status within the centre of the Plan area, underlying an Industrial Facility (P0062-02).

Pressures on waterbodies that are failing to meet the WFD's overall objective of good status will be identified by the SEA and policy responses will be recommended as necessary. The SEA will also provide information on aquifer vulnerability, aquifer productivity and entries to the WFD's Registers of Protected Areas.

### 3.5.2 Flooding

The most significant sources of flood risk within the Plan area are from fluvial (from rivers/streams), however there are other sources of flooding present including coastal and those from pluvial (from rainwater) and surface drainage systems.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), as required by 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009) and Circular PL 2/2014 (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government), is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the SEA and the preparation of the Draft Plan. The SFRA will focus on land use zoning as well as flood risk management policy. The SFRA will consider available and emerging information on flood risk indicators.

## 3.6 Air and Climatic Factors

### 3.6.1 Overview

The key issue involving the assessment of the effects of implementing the Plan on air and climatic factors relates to emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions, arising from transport. Travel is a source of:

1. Noise;
2. Air emissions; and
3. Energy use.

The SEAI's *Energy in Ireland 2022 Report*<sup>25</sup> identifies that transport remains the most carbon intensive demand sector in Ireland, with 95.5% of transport energy demand coming from fossil fuels in 2021. The transport sector emitted 12 MtCO<sub>2</sub> in 2021 and accounted for 34% of Ireland's total energy emissions (private car use is by far the largest transport sub-sector accounting for 43% of all transport energy demand in 2021).

### 3.6.2 Air

The EPA's (2022) *Air Quality in Ireland 2021 Report* identifies that:

- Air quality in Ireland is generally good, however, there are localised issues.
- Ireland met all of its EU legal requirements in 2021 but it failed to meet the new WHO-based guideline levels for Health in 2021.
- Air quality monitoring results in 2021 showed that fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) mainly from burning solid fuel, and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) mainly from road transport, remain the main threats to good air quality.
- It is estimated that there are approximately 1,300 premature deaths annually in Ireland due to poor air quality from fine particulate matter (PM<sub>5</sub>).

With regards to solutions, the report identifies that:

- Ireland and Europe should move towards achieving the health-based WHO air quality guidelines.
- The planned National Clean Air Strategy for Ireland needs to be published and fully implemented.
- Local Authorities must provide more resources to increase air enforcement activities.
- National investment in clean public transport is needed across the country.

The current air quality across the area to which the Plan relates is identified by the EPA as being *good*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (December 2022): *Energy in Ireland 2022 Report*

<sup>26</sup> 22/03/2023 (<https://www.epa.ie/environment-and-you/air/>).



### 3.6.3 Climatic Factors

The SEA will consider climate action measures under headings including: buildings; transport; water management; infrastructure, including flood defences; wildlife and biodiversity; economy and tourism; and human health.

#### Climate Action Plan

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 (the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021. The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on Ireland's climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated periodically, to ensure alignment with Ireland's legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.

The EPA 2022 publication *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2021-2040* provides an assessment of Ireland's total projected greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2040, updated using the latest Inventory data for 2020. The report provides an assessment of Ireland's progress towards achieving its national ambitions under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and EU emission reduction targets for 2030 as set out under the Effort Sharing Regulation<sup>27</sup>. Key findings identified as part of the report are that:

- Urgent implementation of all climate plans and policies, plus further new measures, are needed for Ireland to meet the 51 per cent emissions reduction target and put Ireland on track for climate neutrality by 2050.
- Ireland can meet its non-ETS EU targets of a 30 per cent emission reduction by 2030 (compared to 2005) assuming implementation of planned policies and measures and the use of the flexibilities available. These include a land use flexibility using the Climate Action Plan 2021 afforestation rate of 8,000 hectares per annum.
- The gap between the 'Existing Measures' and 'Additional Measures' scenarios in these projections highlights that the current pace of implementation will not achieve the change required to meet the Climate Act targets. Faster implementation of 'Additional Measures' is needed to close this gap.
- Carbon budgets proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council have recently been approved by the Oireachtas for the periods 2021-25, 2026-30 and 2031-35. The Projections highlight that there is currently a significant gap between the budgets and the projected emissions over the budget periods. This gap will need to be addressed very quickly if Ireland is to stay within the Carbon Budgets.
- Under the Additional Measures scenario, renewable energy is projected to increase to 78 per cent of electricity generation by 2030 with emissions from the Energy Industry decreasing by 10 per cent per annum from 2021-30. Increased coal use from 2021 and growing energy demand, including from data centres, threaten to negatively impact achievement of National targets, particularly for the first carbon budget period.
- Under the Existing Measures scenario emissions are projected to increase by 1.9 per cent over the 2020-2030 period. A methane emissions reduction of almost 30 per cent is required to achieve a 22 per cent reduction in agriculture emissions compared to 2018, as committed to in the 2021 Climate Action Plan. The sector must clearly set out how this will be achieved to address uncertainty regarding its ability to deliver even the lower end of the range of its sectoral targets within the ever-shortening timeframe to 2030.
- The end of COVID travel restrictions is projected to result in transport emissions increasing by 18-19 per cent from 2020 to 2022. Emissions from the sector are projected to reduce to 39 per cent below 2018 levels by 2030 and achieve a 31.7 per cent renewable transport share if the additional measures in plans and policies are implemented, this includes over 940,000 electric vehicles on the road by 2030, increased biofuel blend rates and measures to support more sustainable transport.
- Spending more time at home due to hybrid working and the increasing cost of fossil fuels highlights the need for our houses to become far more efficient. Implementing currently planned measures for the installation of 680,000 heat-pumps by 2030 as well as retrofitting 500,000 homes is projected to achieve a 41.5 per cent reduction in residential emissions in 2030 (compared to 2018).

#### Climate Mitigation

Climate mitigation describes the action to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g., emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

<sup>27</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/842 of on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement.

## Climate Adaptation

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts.

The National Adaptation Framework (2018), sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts. The Framework outlines a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation. Under the Framework, several Government Departments are required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to a priority area that they are responsible for.

The Wexford County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 features a range of actions across sectors including: agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, built and archaeological heritage, transport infrastructure, electricity and gas networks, communication networks, flood risk management, water quality, water services infrastructure and health. The Strategy seeks to:

- Ensure a proper comprehension of the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change;
- Bring forward the implementation of climate resilient actions in a planned and proactive manner; and
- Ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all plans and policies and integrated into all operations and functions of Wexford County Council.

## 3.7 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those detailed below, that will be covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 3.8) and natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6).

### 3.7.1 Drinking Water

Drinking water demand and capacity information that will be considered by the SEA, where available, includes:

- Population served;
- Demand;
- Supply capacity;
- Spare capacity or shortfall;
- Population provided for by the Plan by 2030 that will be served;
- Predicted 2030 demand;
- Planned 2030 supply capacity;
- Predicted 2030 spare capacity or shortfall; and
- Water supply infrastructure investment needs.

Drinking water must be clean and wholesome. That means it must meet the relevant water quality standards and must not contain any other substance or micro-organism in concentrations or numbers that constitute a potential danger to human health. Compliance with the drinking water requirements is determined by comparing the results of analyses submitted by water suppliers to the standard for 48 parameters specified in the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations (No. 2), 2007. To ensure that these standards are met, each water supply must be monitored on a regular basis.

Irish Water is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure. Public group water schemes manage their own networks but are supplied with treated water by Irish Water. The Plan area is within the Fardystown Water Resource Zone<sup>28</sup> and, as identified by Irish Water, there is capacity available to meet 2031 population targets, although an improvement to the level of service is required.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> A Water Resource Zone (WRZ) is an independent water supply system serving a region, city, town or village and is governed by topography or the extent of the water distribution network in an area. A WRZ may include multiple Water Treatment Plants and/or sources.

<sup>29</sup> Capacity constraints exist, connection applications will be assessed on an individual basis considering their specific demand requirements. An improvement to the Level of service will be required to meet 2031 population targets. This may take the form of

Water Supply Schemes for the Plan area comprise: the Wexford Town Water Supply Scheme. The Wexford Town Public Water Supply Scheme produces 220 m<sup>3</sup>/hour of water and serves a population of 21,055. Water is abstracted from the River Sow and the Coolree Impoundment Reservoir and treated at the Wexford Town Water Treatment Plant.<sup>30</sup>

Under Section 58 of the EPA Act 1992 the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports, which are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). These lists identify water supplies that are not in compliance with the Drinking Water Regulations. The Wexford Town Public Water Supply is listed on the most recent RAL (Q4 of 2022; published in February 2023)<sup>31</sup>, due to treatment and management issues.

Available water services demand, capacity and quality/performance information will be considered by the SEA.

### 3.7.2 Wastewater

Wastewater demand and capacity information that will be considered by the SEA, where available, includes<sup>32</sup>:

- Population served;
- Loading;
- Capacity;
- Level of treatment;
- Spare capacity or shortfall;
- Compliance with urban wastewater treatment Directive;
- Population provided for by the Plan by 2030 that will be served;
- Predicted 2030 loading;
- Planned 2030 capacity;
- Predicted 2030 spare capacity or shortfall; and
- Wastewater infrastructure investment needs.

Irish Water is responsible for the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater where public wastewater facilities exist in towns and villages. In unserved areas and outside the main towns and villages, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems.

The Wexford Town Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) has a design capacity of 45,000 (PE). In 2021 it had a load of 30,343 (PE) and spare capacity of 14,657 (PE).<sup>33</sup> As indicated by Irish Water, there is currently spare capacity available at this plant.<sup>34</sup>

The EPA produces annual reports on the treatment of urban wastewater from cities, towns and urban communities and comprehensive lists of priority urban areas, where wastewater treatment needs to improve. The Wexford WWTP is currently fully compliant with the wastewater discharge licence and not identified by the EPA as an urban area with the priority wastewater issues.<sup>35</sup>

Water quality and management of nutrients from sources such as agriculture, municipal wastewater treatment plants and on-site wastewater treatment systems will be also considered by the SEA.

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leakage reduction and/or capital investment to maintain/improve levels of service as the demand increases. Proposed solutions will be developed & prioritised through the National Water Resources Plan and investment planning process. Source: <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/water-supply-capacity-register/wexford/> (Published in March 2022).

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/wexford/Wexford-Town---Oct-2020.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/Q4-2022-RAL-for-Public-Drinking-Water-Supplies-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Detailed water services information will inform the preparation of the SEA Environmental Report.

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.water.ie/docs/aers/2021/D0030-02\\_2021\\_AER.pdf](https://www.water.ie/docs/aers/2021/D0030-02_2021_AER.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Irish Water: *Settlements with Waste Water Discharge Authorisations - Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register*. The register provides an indication of available wastewater treatment capacity based on loads received in 2021 and available treatment plan capacity now or by completion of a project by 2024 (where relevant). Available at: <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/wastewater-treatment-capacity-register/wexford/> (Published in 2022).

<sup>35</sup> EPA (February 2023): <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/waste-water/priority-areas-list-current.php>

### 3.7.3 Transport

Wexford is served by both bus and rail public transport. The rail service operates on the mainline intercity route from Dublin - Rosslare. Wexford is served by bus transport with a range of services to centres including, Rosslare, Carlow, Waterford, Dublin, Arklow, Tullow, Gorey, New Ross. In addition, there is a shuttle bus service which operates in Wexford and an Airport Bus service along with a number of private bus services.

A Preferred Scheme Option Corridor for an upgraded N11/N25 linking Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour was defined in 2021 following an extensive option selection process. TII are now working on the Design and Environmental Evaluation of the selected route. The development of the Eastern Economic Corridor is supported by RPO 42 in the RSES, and this will be both a transport and an economic corridor<sup>36</sup>. The Local Area Plan will be informed by a Local Transport Plan and will include measures relating to active travel and transport infrastructure provision.

### 3.7.4 Waste Management

Waste management within the Plan area is guided by the Southern Waste Management Plan 2015-2021. The Plan provides a framework for the prevention and management of waste in a sustainable manner in ten local authority areas, including that of Wexford County Council's.

### 3.7.5 Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted by the Plan, if unmitigated, include; settlements; resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, wastewater infrastructure etc.); forestry; and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

### 3.7.6 Land and Coastline

The Plan has the potential to assist with the reuse and regeneration of brownfield sites thereby contributing towards sustainable mobility and reducing the need to develop greenfield lands and associated adverse environmental effects. Brownfield lands are generally located within urban/suburban areas. The Plan will facilitate returning existing vacant residential stock into use.

Management of the Town's coastline and coastal erosion are topics that will be considered by the SEA.

## 3.8 Cultural Heritage

### 3.8.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage is protected under various legislation including the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts. The SEA Environmental Report will include information on the archaeological heritage of the Plan area, including that relating to designations such as entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). There are several entries to the RMP within and surrounding the Plan area, such as castles; town defences; religious buildings; graveyards; holy wells; and battlefields. St. Selsker's Augustinian Priory Church is also identified as a National Monument in State Care (Guardianship).<sup>37</sup>

Historic Towns likely to contain subsurface archaeological deposits associated with their early settlement, or the incorporation of early features in what are considered to later/modern structures, have also been identified and included in the RMP. The RMP maps identify these Historic Towns and has de-lined a 'Zone of Archaeological Potential' (ZAP) around each town, including Wexford, within which archaeological features/structures/sub-surface deposits are likely to be present.

<sup>36</sup> Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/pdf/monuments-in-state-care-wexford.pdf>

Waterbodies within the Plan area may contain many features and finds associated with riverine heritage such as shipwrecks, piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and associated archaeological objects and features.

There are various information resources available from the National Monuments Service in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie), including:

- Legal RMP documents;
- Additional archaeological sites and monuments identified by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.
- Historic wrecks; and
- Zones of Archaeological Potential delineated around each Historic Town.

### **3.8.2 Architectural Heritage**

The Record of Protected Structures included in the County Development Plan is legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Protected Structures are defined as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

There are many Protected Structures within and surrounding the Plan area, including: houses; monuments; religious buildings; town walls; graveyards; barracks; and a quay. The notable structures include the Loreto Convent; Wexford Town Military Barracks; and Westgate Gate Tower.<sup>38</sup> Some of these Protected Structures are located within the central parts of Wexford Town and Architectural Conservation Areas identified below (ACA).

An ACA is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures. There are three Architectural Conservation Areas identified within the Plan area.

A Heritage-Led Regeneration Plan for Wexford Town was launched in June 2023 with funding from the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage through the Historic Towns Initiative.

The SEA Environmental Report will include information on the architectural heritage of the Plan area, including that relating to designations such as entries to the Record of Protected Structures.

## **3.9 Landscape**

Wexford Town is set in a coastal landscape of high natural amenity. Most of its urban area is bounded by water, including the River Slaney, its estuary and Wexford harbour, all of which are visible from the Town's environs.

The Landscape Character Assessment for County Wexford identifies four Landscape Character Units (Uplands; Lowlands; River Valley; and Coastal) and the 'Distinctive Landscapes', which are found within these areas. They represent the features in the landscape and seascape which have the most visual interest and prominence, and are therefore generally more sensitive to development. Many of these features also have profound historical, socio-cultural and religious interest.

The Plan area is located partially within the Coastal, Lowlands and River Valley Landscape Units. Distinctive Landscapes designated by the County Development Plan include that Wexford Harbour.

The SEA Environmental Report will include information on the landscape designations of the Plan area.

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<sup>38</sup> Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

## Section 4 Key Scoping Issues

### 4.1 Introduction and Overview

Key scoping issues comprise:

- The information to be considered for each of the environmental components which is detailed in Section 3 of this report; and
- The potential significant environmental effects which may arise from implementation of the new LAP (see Section 4.4 below).

In compliance with the legislation, the following environmental components, and any relevant interrelationships<sup>39</sup>, will be considered by the SEA:

- Biodiversity and flora and fauna;
- Population and human health;
- Soil (including contaminated lands);
- Water (including flood risk and the status of rivers, lakes, and groundwater bodies);
- Air and climatic factors (including sustainable mobility and associated effects - energy usage and emissions to air including noise and greenhouse gases);
- Material assets (including provision of adequate and appropriate wastewater and drinking water services and waste management);
- Cultural heritage (architectural and archaeological heritage); and
- Landscape.

These topics will be addressed as relevant in the description (mapped and textual) of the environmental baseline, in Strategic Environmental Objectives, indicators and targets and in the identification of likely significant environmental effects, if any, and in the inclusion of Plan provisions for environmental protection and sustainable development.

### 4.2 Guidelines and Legislation

The SEA, AA and SFRA will ensure compliance with the following legislation:

- The SEA Directive and the Habitats and Birds Directives;
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004);
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011);
- The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended); and
- The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

In addition to complying with the legislation, the processes will be undertaken considering the following guidance:

- *Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities* Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022.
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission Environment DG, 2000.
- *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment*, Environment Protection Agency, 2015. *EPA GISEA Manual: Current Practice and Potential on the Application of Geographical Information Systems as a Support Tool in Strategic Environmental Assessment of Irish Land Use Plans*, Environment Protection Agency, 2009.
- *Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment*, European Commission, 2013.
- *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner’s Manual*, Environment Protection Agency, 2013.
- *Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland*. Environmental Protection Agency, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> In addition to being identified in relevant sections of the SEA Environmental Report as they arise, interrelationships will be given a specific sub-section and an interrelationships matrix will be included.

- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC: European Commission, 2000.*
- *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009.
- Relevant Official Government Circulars.
- Relevant European Court of Justice Judgements.

### **4.3 Relationship with other plans and programmes**

The Plan is nested in a hierarchy of plans and programmes that relate to various sectors. The SEA Environmental Report will provide details on the relationship between the Plan and other plans and programmes. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level plans/programmes/etc. and may, in turn, guide lower-level plans/programmes/etc. The SEA and AA will take account of the Council’s obligation to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

In considering the relationship with legislation and other plans and programmes it is important to note that the Plan will be implemented within an area that has existing plans and programmes for a range of sectors (e.g., land use, transport, energy and water management) at a range of levels (e.g., national, river basin district, regional and county) that are already subject to more specific higher tier SEA, AA and SFRA.

The findings of the environmental assessments of higher and lower tier plans (e.g., those of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region, the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the County Wexford Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024) will be taken into account by the SEA for the Local Area Plan.

### **4.4 Consideration of Potential Significant Environmental Effects**

As the Draft Plan emerges the SEA will identify, describe, evaluate and mitigate likely significant environmental effects of implementation.

Plan measures providing for new development and continuance and intensification of use would be likely to result in potentially significant adverse effects, if unmitigated, while other Plan measures – including those that will be integrated into the Plan through the SEA/AA/SFRA processes – would be likely to contribute towards environmental protection and management and sustainable development.

The SEA will consider the full range of likely significant environmental effects<sup>40</sup> including effects occurring at construction as well as operational stages. Examples of the potential environmental effects that may be considered by the SEA include those identified on Table 4.1.

### **4.5 Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), and subsequent stages of AA as relevant, and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) are both being undertaken alongside the SEA and the preparation and adoption of the Draft Plan (see Sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3). The preparation of the Draft Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA will take place concurrently and the findings of the AA Screening/AA and SFRA will inform both the SEA and the Draft Plan.

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<sup>40</sup> These effects include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

## **4.6 Alternatives**

The SEA will examine different reasonable alternatives considering the objectives and the geographical scope of the Plan, as required by the SEA Directive.

Given detailed provisions already in force through, for example, the County Development Plan, the alternatives available for the Local Area Plan are limited. Both the Plan and the alternatives must be consistent with the provisions of the County Development Plan.

## **4.7 Mitigation**

Measures to contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development will be recommended by the SEA for integration into the Draft Plan where necessary. The measures will include the various measures already in force through the existing County Development Plan.

Mitigation measures will address all types of significant adverse environmental effects (see Section 4.4), including those arising from cumulative effects. Mitigation measures will consider any suggestions in the submissions from environmental authorities.

## **4.8 Monitoring**

The SEA will include information on the nature and frequency of monitoring to be carried out and organisations responsible for carrying out the monitoring. Monitoring measures will incorporate relevant measures identified by the existing County Development Plan SEA. Guidance from the EPA will be considered in this regard.



**Table 4.1 Examples of the potential environmental effects that may be considered by the SEA**

<b>Environmental Component</b>	<b>Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework</b>	
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Southern RSES, the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans	
	<b>Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur</b>	<b>Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated</b>
<b>Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.</li> </ul>	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;</li> <li>Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and</li> <li>Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds (e.g. swifts) and bats.</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services (including transport, social and community infrastructure, active travel networks and 10 minute town initiatives), thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, including air and water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential adverse effects arising from flood events.</li> <li>Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors – including as a result of inappropriate uses, for example, adjacent to Seveso site.</li> </ul>
<b>Soil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond. This will include regeneration and compact growth, favouring of brownfield and infill development, the development of land sequentially and a tiered approach to zoning.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the protection of the environment from contamination the highest standards of remediation, and where appropriate to consultations with the EPA and other relevant bodies, will be required to resolve any instances of environmental pollution created by contaminated land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.</li> <li>Potential for riverbank/coastal erosion.</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond. Compact growth, brownfield and infill development, sequential development and a tiered zoning approach will help to ensure efficient use of services and infrastructure.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface (including coastal and transitional) and groundwaters and water-based designations.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.</li> <li>Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.</li> </ul>

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Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework	
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated
<b>Material Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart buildings, cities and grids.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).</li> <li>Increases in waste levels.</li> <li>Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.</li> <li>Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.</li> </ul>
<b>Air and Climatic Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the Plan area) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services (including transport, social and community infrastructure, active travel networks and 10 minute town initiatives), thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the Plan area and beyond.</li> <li>In combination with other plans, programmes etc., the SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable compact growth;</li> <li>Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport;</li> <li>Drainage, flood risk management and resilience;</li> <li>Sectors including agriculture, residential heating and infrastructure;</li> <li>Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.</li> <li>Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.</li> <li>Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.</li> <li>Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere by facilitating development within the Plan area.</li> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan: contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within the Plan area by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration; and promotes heritage-led regeneration and adaptation of historic buildings (link to climate action).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SEA will seek to ensure that the Plan contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within the Plan area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.</li> </ul>

## **Section 5 What happens next?**

As part of the SEA scoping process, environmental authorities specified under the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, were notified that a submission or observation in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA Environmental Report can be made to the Council. Scoping notices issued to these authorities were accompanied by an earlier version of this SEA Scoping Report. SEA scoping submissions made by environmental authorities, and consideration of these submissions by the SEA process, will inform the preparation of the SEA Environmental Report.

The findings of the assessment will be presented in an SEA Environmental Report that will accompany the Draft Plan on public display as part of the required statutory public consultation. The findings of both the AA and SFRA will be integrated into the SEA Environmental Report. AA and SFRA documents will also accompany the Draft Plan on public display.