



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLAIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report of the Draft Shannon Town Centre Masterplan having regard to European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (“SEA Directive”)

Prepared in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the
Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (“SEA Directive”) as
transposed by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans
and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.

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1.0 Introduction and Background

Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes both the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF) and a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2018 to 2027, the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF outlines the broader policy principles and priorities to plan, in a more strategic, sustainable and coordinated manner, for future population and economic growth over the next 20 years.

Clare County Council through its Economic Directorate and Shannon Municipal District Office are the primary drivers and enablers of economic growth for Shannon Town. Through its legislative, civil and democratic functions the Local Authority sets out and adopts land use, transport and investment policies for the town and county. Clare County Council both influences and transposes National and Regional (Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy) policy including *Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework*. The enhanced development of Shannon Town sits within several of the National Strategic Outcomes contained in the National Planning Framework as follows;

NSO1 Compact Growth – It is anticipated that Shannon Town and surrounding area will experience considerable growth in the coming years having regard to the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan and the population targets associated with same. Future growth must be sustainable growth that will benefit the town while also creating an attractive place in which people can live and work. The preparation of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS) by the National Transport Authority will also inform this work.

NSO5 A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills. Existing employment opportunities in Shannon are critical not only for Shannon and Co. Clare but for the Mid-West Region. Shannon is critical to delivering the ambition of how the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area (MASP) develops in terms of its economy, social diversity and growth. The Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) identifies a significant opportunity for Shannon to expand globally as a recognised centre of excellence for current and future software engineering/aviation/logistics/research and development for autonomous vehicles.

NSO7 Enhanced Amenity and Heritage. It is intended that future development in Shannon will include for enhanced public realm development in the town centre, building on the existing network of paths, walks and Shannon Town Park, which have evolved from the Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan prepared by Clare County Council.

As part of Project Ireland 2040 the Government announced the establishment of a new Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), primarily to support the compact growth and sustainable development of Ireland's five cities and other large urban centres. In line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Fund is designed to leverage a greater proportion of residential and commercial development, supported by infrastructure, services and amenities, within the existing built "footprint" of our larger settlements.

Clare County Council made an application for funding for Shannon under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund in September 2018. On the 18th of June 2019 Approval in Principle was provided

from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government together with an allocation for the **“Development for a Strategic Masterplan for Shannon”**.

It is intended that the Masterplan will guide and stimulate the development of Shannon Town Centre into the future and will influence and deliver on real change for Shannon Town in order to make Shannon a more attractive destination in which to live, work and do business. The Masterplan looks at growth potential, use of derelict and vacant sites within the Town Centre, development potential of key sites at the entrance points from the road network and will seek to create a vibrant place for people to meet, recreate and connect with their area.

As Clare County Council has not determined that the Draft Masterplan would be likely to have significant environmental effects it must first be screened for the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Screening is the process for deciding whether a particular Plan or Programme, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and thus would warrant SEA. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the requirement for SEA of the proposed Masterplan.

In doing so, the Council must decide whether the Masterplan would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and in doing so must take account of the relevant criteria set out in the SEA Directive as transposed into Irish Legislation in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004 as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2011 S.I. No. 201 of 2011.

It should be noted that the Clare CDP 2017-2023 (as varied), The Shannon Local Area Plan 2012-2018 (As Amended), the NPF and RSES were all subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment. The appropriate environmental authorities were consulted throughout the SEA process and therefore the objectives and changes arising from these plans and strategies sitting above the Masterplan in the planning hierarchy have all been subjected to a thorough and robust level of assessment.

The Council, in consultation with the statutory authorities, must make a determination as to whether an SEA is required, taking account of the relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and any submissions or observations received from the prescribed environmental authorities.

1.1 Legislative context

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans or programmes that are prepared in one of 11 specified sectors as follows;

- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Fisheries
- Energy
- Industry
- Transport
- Waste Management

- Water Management
- Telecommunications
- Tourism
- Town and Country Planning
- Land Use

In Ireland this Directive has been transposed into legislation under two separate regulations **S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities) (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 to 2011**. These regulations set out the following:

Schedule 1: Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment and therefore require an SEA.

Schedule 2: Information to be contained in an Environmental Report

Articles 9-17 of those Regulations set out the requirement to complete an Environmental Report, scoping, timing, consultation, transboundary effects and monitoring associated with completing same.

S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (European Communities) (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 to 2011.

These Regulations specifically relate to the requirement to carry out SEA for Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Regional Planning Guidelines.

This report is the screening statement for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Shannon Masterplan. Article 3(4) of Directive 2001/42/EC requires that *“Member States shall determine whether plans and programmes other than those referred to in paragraph 2, which set the framework for future development consent of projects, are likely to have significant environmental effects”*. This process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore, would require SEA is known as ‘Screening’.

The criteria for determining (or Screening) whether a particular plan *is likely to have significant environmental effects* are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. These criteria are reproduced in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, and again in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

2.0 Planning Hierarchy and the Purpose of the Shannon Masterplan

The National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. On the 16th of February 2018, the Government published the National Planning Framework (NPF), which, together with the National Development Plan (NDP), form ‘Project Ireland 2040’ – the Government’s vision for how to develop the country over the coming decades. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to

create and promote opportunities for our people, and to protect and enhance our environment – from our villages to our cities, and everything around and in between. The purpose of the National Planning Framework is to enable all parts of Ireland, whether rural or urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, by facilitating a shift towards Ireland’s regions and cities other than Dublin, while also recognising Dublin’s ongoing key role.

The NPF was supported by the publication of the Implementation Roadmap for the National Planning Framework (‘Roadmap’) which was published on the 3rd of July 2018. This document confirmed that the NPF was adopted as a strategy to replace the National Spatial Strategy (2002-2020, NSS) and advised that the NPF is of direct relevance to the preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and County Development Plans.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region and includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the Region’s three main cities and metropolitan areas – Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.

The RSES sets out a vision for the Southern Region to:

- Nurture all our places to realise their full potential
- Protect, and enhance our environment
- Successfully combat climate change
- Achieve economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all our citizens.
- Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations.
- Make the Southern Region one of Europe’s most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions.

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied)

Volume 3b of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 contains the Written Statement and Settlement Plans for the Shannon Municipal District. The vision and goals for Shannon Town and Environs are set out in the Local Area Plan and are summarised within Volume 3b. The vision for Shannon is encapsulated in the following statement:

‘A town where people want to live and work sustainably and visit because of its strong identity and sense of place, high amenity value and quality of life. A sustainable, low carbon town, which continues to be the regional leader for economic development and employment, maximising its strategic location, accessibility and gateway status’.

This vision is achieved through a number of strategic goals which are also outlined in Volume 3b with the following forming the key goals of relevance to this draft Masterplan:

- To foster a strong identity and sense of place;
- To secure a vibrant and viable town centre;
- To facilitate community, social, cultural and recreational development;
- To actively pursue a low carbon strategy;

- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- To deliver an integrated and coherent green infrastructure strategy, encouraging walking, cycling and recreation;
- To maximise infrastructural resources, include the Shannon Estuary.

The Shannon Masterplan

The Shannon Masterplan will guide and stimulate the development of Shannon Town Centre into the future and will influence and deliver on real change for Shannon Town in order to make Shannon a more attractive destination in which to live, work and do business. The Masterplan looks at growth potential, use of derelict and vacant sites within the Town Centre, development potential of key sites at the entrance points from the road network and will seek to create a vibrant place for people to meet, recreate and connect with their area. It does not serve a statutory function in terms of zoning which can only be undertaken as part of any future Variation or review of the existing Shannon LAP 2012-2018 as amended. The key focus of the Masterplan is to provide the Spatial Framework within which the Shannon Town Centre can be reinvigorated and expanded. It will provide a schematic view and layout for the future development of the urban area of the Town Centre.

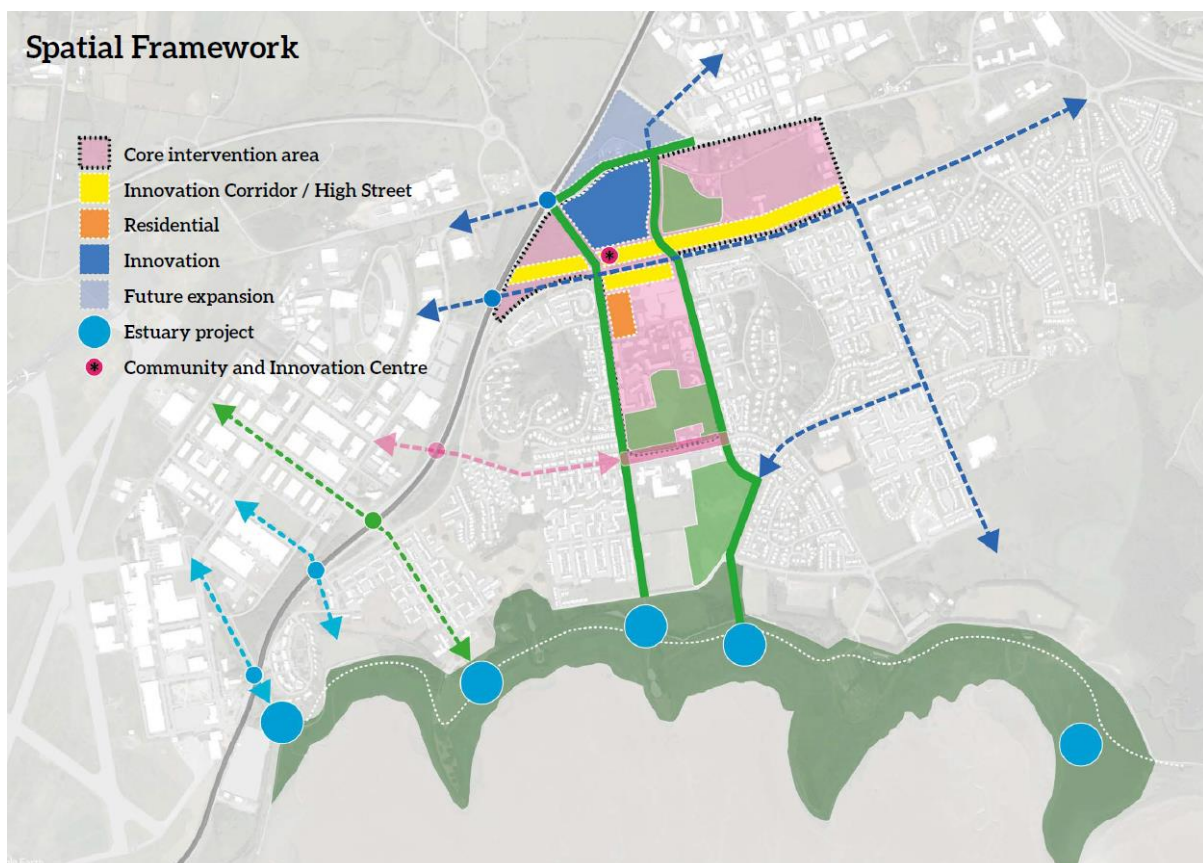


Figure 1 Spatial Framework of the Shannon Town Masterplan

3.0 The Draft Masterplan and Screening for Requirement for SEA

The Masterplan is a non-statutory land use plan and is being screened for the requirement for SEA in accordance with the requirements of:

- Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and particularly Articles 3(3), 3(4) & 3(5) relate to 'Screening' for the requirement for SEA.
- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.
- Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, which sets out the *"Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment"*.

This Report constitutes a Screening of the proposed Draft Plan for the requirement for SEA in accordance with the above legislation. The report has been prepared following consultation with the Environmental Authorities specified in Paragraph 9(5) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011. The specified Environmental Authorities are listed in **Appendix 1** of this Report.

3.1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) and relationship to Screening for SEA

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) to be carried out where a plan or project is *likely to have a significant impact* on a European site. European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The first step in the process is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This first step is referred to as Screening for the requirement for AA and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/084 (15th February 2008), Screening for AA is of relevance to screening for SEA in that ***"where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:***

- an AA of the plan must be carried out, and
- in any case where a SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."

Hence, where the plan *requires* AA it shall *also require* a SEA.

3.2 Consultation with Environmental Authorities

In accordance with Article 9(5) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, Clare County Council have provided notice to the specified environmental authorities (below) that implementation of the Draft Masterplan would *not be likely to have significant effects on the environment* and sought submissions or observations prior to finalising the Screening for the Requirement for SEA.

The preliminary Screening for SEA was issued to the following specified environmental authorities:

- (a) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- (b) the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- (c) where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media;
- (d) where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and
- (e) the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications

The preliminary Screening was also issued to the local authorities bounding the Clare County Council area.

6.0 Screening for the Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The following section and table below present's the SEA screening assessment of the Draft Masterplan against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of SEA Regulations (S.I. 436 of 2004) as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011), which details the criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The Screening assessment should be read in conjunction with the Draft Masterplan together with the Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

Table 1 SEA Screening against Schedule 2a criteria

Criteria for determining whether the Draft Masterplan is likely to have significant effects on the environment	
1. The characteristics of the Draft Masterplan having regard to:	
(i)	<i>the degree to which the Draft Masterplan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,</i>
<p>The land use zoning objectives and activities for lands in Shannon are set out in the Shannon Local Area Plan 2012-2021 and the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied). The preparation of the Masterplan clearly align with the Strategic Goals as set out in Volume 3 Shannon Municipal District Written Statement of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied). In particular, Volume 3 of the County Development Plan outlines the focus on the town centre and its aim in delivering a <i>vibrant and viable town centre</i> for Shannon with a range of retail and service facilities. <i>The opportunity for redevelopment of the existing Town Centre towards a mixed-use approach to all proposals</i> is clearly highlighted within the County Development Plan. While the Draft Masterplan includes for a schematic indication of potential future access routes around the Town Centre these routes have also been included in the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2012-2018 with respect to the area identified as OS1 – Future Civic Park in the LAP the new road network is identified as part of this zoning and is also outlined in Figure 2.3 of the LAP. The LAP was subject to both SEA and AA. Any changes to the use or zoning of these lands would need to form part of a Variation to the Shannon Town and Environs LAP, however the Draft Masterplan does not provide for any change of zoning at this juncture. The SEA associated with the Shannon LAP notes that a comprehensive Masterplan for the entire site to the north of Bother Mór which is consistent with the objectives of the Local Area Plan, taking account of the Shannon Place Making Strategy shall be prepared. The Draft Masterplan illustrates a variety of mixed uses which align with the objectives of the Shannon LAP. The LAP seeks to link the existing town centre through strong pedestrian and road linkages to a new area which incorporates a street plaza, high street retail uses, restaurants/café cluster, outlet center, public open spaces, small office units and so on. This type of mixed-use development integrated with pedestrian and road linkages is what the Draft Masterplan is striving to illustrate.</p> <p>Therefore, the Draft Masterplan outlines potential future arrangements for Shannon Town lands in a manner which is consistent with the established land use zoning objectives for these lands.</p>	

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied sets out the proposed Vision and objectives for the development of the County over a six-year period. The Development Plan aims to plan for and support the sustainable long-term development of Clare; provide for the future wellbeing of the residents and promote an appropriate balance of development across the County. All planning proposals are assessed against the objectives of the Development Plan and all lower plans must be consistent with the County Development Plan.

The Core Strategy which defines the settlement hierarchy; identifies housing and population targets; providing a rationale for the land proposed to be zoned for residential development, together with the associated zoning this will not be altered as a result of the Draft Masterplan. Should the Clare County Development Plan or the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan be varied in the future to take onboard the Masterplan then and only then will zoning changes be reviewed and taken into consideration as part of the statutory process.

While the Draft Masterplan does set out the spatial framework for future development in Shannon Town with regard to their location, nature and size it does not provide for the re-zoning or de-zoning of lands and will not specify locational requirements. The Clare CDP 2017-2023 (as varied) sets out clearly the spatial framework for development locations and landuse in the County with any future planning application assessed against its requirements and not the requirements of the Masterplan.

(ii) the degree to which the Draft Masterplan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,

The Shannon Masterplan will be a non-statutory plan that responds directly to a specific objective of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) CDP Objective 7.5 Shannon Town Centre which requires the *“examination of the possibility of creating a distinct shopping character for the town centre, reflecting its linked Gateway status and increasing its attractiveness to tourists, particularly those using the airport”*. The primary purpose of the Draft Masterplan is to provide further detail and clarity with regard to the intentions of the Planning Authority to give effect to the objectives for the lands. The Masterplan will have no influence on other plans either above or below in a hierarchy.

Therefore, the Draft Masterplan will be a non-statutory plan that provides detail and clarity with regard to the existing land use objectives for the lands. The sustainability principles at the core of the Draft Masterplan are informed by the existing policy and key objectives in the current Clare County Development Plan. Therefore, future development will continue to accord with the objectives and policies, including the environmental requirements of the Development Plan.

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied sits at Local Government level, of the Spatial Planning Hierarchy in Ireland, and below the Regional Assembly and Government level. The Plan sits at the top of the local Government level and influences Local Area Plans (LAP).

The Draft Masterplan is set within the context of the current Clare CDP 2017-2023 (as varied). It will not have significant influence on other plans in the hierarchy instead it will be led by those higher up in the process. As a Masterplan, it is compatible and complementary with the vision and objectives of

the current County Development Plan and will be led by the higher-level plans such as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the National Planning Framework.

(iii) *the relevance of the Draft Masterplan in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,*

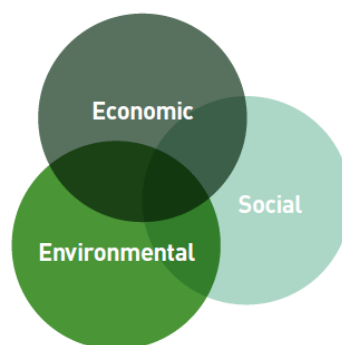
The Draft Masterplan outlines potential future arrangements for Shannon Town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the land use zoning objectives for the lands as established in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) and arising from the Shannon Town and Environs LAP 2012-2018 (as amended). The Clare County Development Plan was subject to a full SEA and AA. The Draft Masterplan takes account of the existing requirements of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 to:

avoid effects on European Sites –

- The Draft Masterplan has been subject to Screening for the requirement for AA;
- Avoid giving rise to adverse flooding effects, or effects on existing flood patterns –
 - The Draft Plan has been cognisant of the SFRA prepared as part of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied)
- Ensure adequacy of critical infrastructure including, wastewater treatment, potable water supply, sustainable transport corridors; and
- Provide for sustainable development, in terms of meeting the needs for balanced population growth, enhanced biodiversity, promotion of green infrastructure, positive climate action and protection of heritage.

As the Draft Masterplan will not lead to the alteration of existing protective objectives within the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) it will be subject to the high-level protective objectives with which it must comply together with the SEA Strategic Environmental Objectives associated with the Clare County Development Plan. Of particular relevance are the following objectives which promote sustainable development across the 3 pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental and which have not been altered as a result of the Draft Masterplan;

- CDP Objective 14.1-14.27
- CDP Objectives 18.1-18.10



In addition, the LAP contains an objective which requires all future planning applications within the Shannon Town and Environs Plan area to demonstrate how they contribute to the development of a low carbon town and how they have incorporated the principles of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied, which underwent full SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA), integrated environmental considerations into the Plan and concluded that the Plan is based on the principles of sustainable development.

(iv) *Environmental problems relevant to the Draft Masterplan*

The Masterplan will be a non-statutory plan which outlines potential development arrangements for Shannon Town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the land use zoning objectives for the lands as established in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied).

The SEA Environmental Report of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, provides considerable detail on environmental issues relevant to the County.

The environmental report conducted as part of the SEA process on the entire content of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 discussed various issues of concern in the plan area (County Clare) and provided various mitigating measures to decrease impacts considered to be severe or significant.

There are numerous areas of environmental sensitivity within the County, many of which are designated under the legislative framework. These include: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas, Proposed National Heritage Areas (pNHA), views and prospects, Architectural and Archeological Conservation Areas, protected structures, recorded monuments and structures, and recreational and amenity areas. Details of these areas together with aims and policies for their protection is set out in the Clare CDP 2017-2023, as varied, as and the accompanying SEA and AA.

As already stated the Draft Masterplan will not give rise to any rezoning of lands and must ensure consistency with the CDP which sets out the framework for development and landuse. Therefore, any future development associated with the CDP will be subject to CDP Objective 2.1.

It is an objective of the development plan:

a) To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report contained in Volume 10 of this development plan;

b) To require projects to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project planning and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to species, where required;

c) To require compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive, specifically Article 6(3) and, where necessary, Article 6(4), the Bird Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EU Directives.

(v) the relevance of the Draft Masterplan in the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).

The Masterplan will be a non-statutory plan which outlines potential development arrangements for Shannon Town in a manner which is entirely consistent with the land use zoning objectives for the lands as established in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied). Therefore, the Draft Masterplan includes for the implementation of European environmental legislation as already set out in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, or where otherwise required or updated since the adoption of the Clare County Development Plan.

The EU has a wide range of environmental legislation, dealing with such issues as tackling climate change, sustainable development, waste management, air pollution, water protection, nature and biodiversity, soil protection and noise pollution. Directives relating to the environment are specifically mentioned in the Clare CDP with which the content of the Masterplan has been developed in compliance with which are;

- EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC),
- EU Water Framework Directive (2006/60/EC),
- EU Groundwater Directive 92/06/118/EC),
- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 S.I. 350 of 2014
- Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, and
- Flora Protection Order 1999
- EU Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)

The Draft Masterplan is consistent with all existing national and regional policy documents which include policies relating to environmental protection, water supply, water quality, ground water, waste management, landscape and cultural heritage in compliance with EU legislation. These include the *Water Framework Directive*, *Groundwater Directive*, *Habitats Directive* and *Birds Directive*. The Draft Masterplan does not in its own right relate to the direct implementation of any of these Directives.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

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

Typical effects in keeping with the development of the lands for primarily retail, commercial, office and innovation space will be in line with the zoning as outlined in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023. The Draft Masterplan will provide for a green square, town hall, greenhouse to accommodate multiple office and civic uses, estuary hall which will incorporate cultural and music centers, it will demonstrate how Shannon Town Centre can create a compact retail circuit which aligns

with the principles of sustainable development and compact growth. The lands are zoned for these proposed uses in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) and similar uses are located on lands within and surrounding the Town Centre. It is considered that these characteristics of the effects of the Draft Masterplan will be minimal and will largely be positive and would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

This draft Masterplan does not seek to diverge from the uses or zoning as identified in the Clare County Development Plan and only serves to outline a **Strategic Framework** for future development. In addition, its incorporation does not conflict with or lead to cumulative or in-combination effects with the current CDP.

(ii) the cumulative nature of the effects,

No cumulative effects are identified for the Draft Masterplan. There are no specific development proposals arising from the Draft Masterplan and no changes to the Core Strategy which could potentially lead to cumulative effects with the current County Development Plan. The Draft Masterplan forms part of the overall balanced development strategy of Clare County Council as set out in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied). The Clare County Development Plan, which included the land use objectives for the lands, was subject to SEA

(iii) the transboundary nature of the effects

In terms of negative transboundary environmental effects/impacts it is considered that with proper regard and consistency with the environmental protection objectives contained in the adopted 2017-2023 Development Plan (as varied) and the completion of appropriate environmental assessments and planning process for any proposed development arising from the Plan as it currently exists, no negative transboundary environmental effects are predicted.

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

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied contains protective objectives for human health and the environment. No risks to human health or to the environment due to accidents or other considerations due to the preparation of the Draft Masterplan have been identified.

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

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, as varied, contains objectives to facilitate population and economic growth. The purpose of the Draft Masterplan is to set out the Spatial Framework within which the Town Centre can become more integrated, create a high street at the heart of an innovation corridor, provide for new employment clusters and to enhance and highlight the connectivity to the Shannon Estuary through a biodiverse corridor. Therefore, while the geographical area extends to the Shannon Town Centre and identifies green infrastructure links to the Shannon Estuary, the draft Masterplan itself is not envisaged to lead to any negative effects and will not go beyond or over and above the effects arising from the Vision and Objectives of the current Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied).

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

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied contains protective objectives with respect to the special natural characteristics or cultural heritage of the area. There are no European Sites or Natural Heritage Areas within the geographical extent of the Draft Masterplan. The nearest European Site is the Lower River Shannon cSAC and River Shannon and Fergus Estuaries SPA for which the Draft Masterplan does not identify any spatial elements except for connectivity to the town centre. The Draft Masterplan will not alter, remove or change these protective objectives which will ensure the continued protection of these sites and features.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

As the Draft Masterplan and any works arising from it must be consistent and compliant with the Clare CDP 2017-2023 as varied including specific provisions regarding environmental quality standards such as those contained in the Water Framework Directive and other environmental standards it is not anticipated that any environmental quality standards will be exceeded.

(c) intensive land-use,

The Draft Masterplan does not represent a change in landuse or potentially permitted activities or any intensification of land-use within the Shannon Town Centre.

(d) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 as varied recognises the importance of sites with National and European designations and sets out clear objectives for their protection as already outlined within this assessment.

A separate Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been carried out in tandem with the SEA Screening of the Draft Masterplan in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive to assess the *likely significant effects* in relation to the conservation management objectives of European sites and the Draft Masterplan. The AA Screening concluded that the Draft Masterplan, in view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on the conservation objectives of any European sites.

The Draft Masterplan is designed to ensure that it is compatible and complementary with the relevant objectives of the existing Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) the higher level NPF together with the RSES. It does not identify specific areas for development which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status. Therefore, effects on areas or landscapes are not envisaged.

6.0 Recommendation on requirement for SEA

Following detailed review and assessment it is considered that the Draft Masterplan for Shannon Town **will not result in significant adverse environmental effects and therefore, does not require further assessment of the likely effect on the environment of the preparation of the Draft Masterplan through SEA.**

This assessment is derived from consideration of the following factors:

- The Masterplan is a non-statutory plan, which sits below the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) in the planning hierarchy;
- The lands are already zoned for the mixed use, residential and open space use in the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) which was subject to full SEA;
- The existing protective objectives and policies of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) still apply;
- The Draft Shannon Town Masterplan does not require AA;
- The minimal nature of any likely adverse environmental effects arising from the Draft Shannon Town Masterplan; and
- Consultation with Environmental Authorities.

Appendix 1: List of Statutory Environmental Authorities

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Adjoining Planning Authorities