

STRATEGIC  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT  
SCREENING REPORT OF  
THE PROPOSED  
EXTENSION OF THE  
CROOM LAP  
2020-2026

November 2024

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Requirements for SEA

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including landuse of which the proposed extension of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026 by four years until 2028, prepared by Limerick City and County Council potentially relates. The following Regulations transpose this Directive into Irish law:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004),
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004) and further amended by
- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011) and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (as amended) state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. The purpose of this screening report is to determine whether the making and implementation of the plan will or will not, lead to significant environmental effects for the plan area and if it will require a full Strategic Environment Assessment.

In deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive - which is reproduced in the Schedule 2A to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as inserted by article 12 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

The approach to this screening assessment is to assess the overall Aims and Actions contained in the proposed extension to the Croom LAP (the previous iteration of which, Croom LAP 2020-2026 has also been screened for SEA) against the criteria contained in Schedule 2a of the Regulations (known as a Screening Table). To ensure this SEA Screening is consistent with the statutory landuse framework, the assessment has been undertaken against the Strategic Environmental Objectives of the SEA Environmental Report of the LCCC County Development Plan 2022-2028. Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at International, Community or Member State level and are used as standards against which the provisions of the plan can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

An assessment under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive has also been undertaken in conjunction with this SEA Screening report and should be read in tandem with this report.

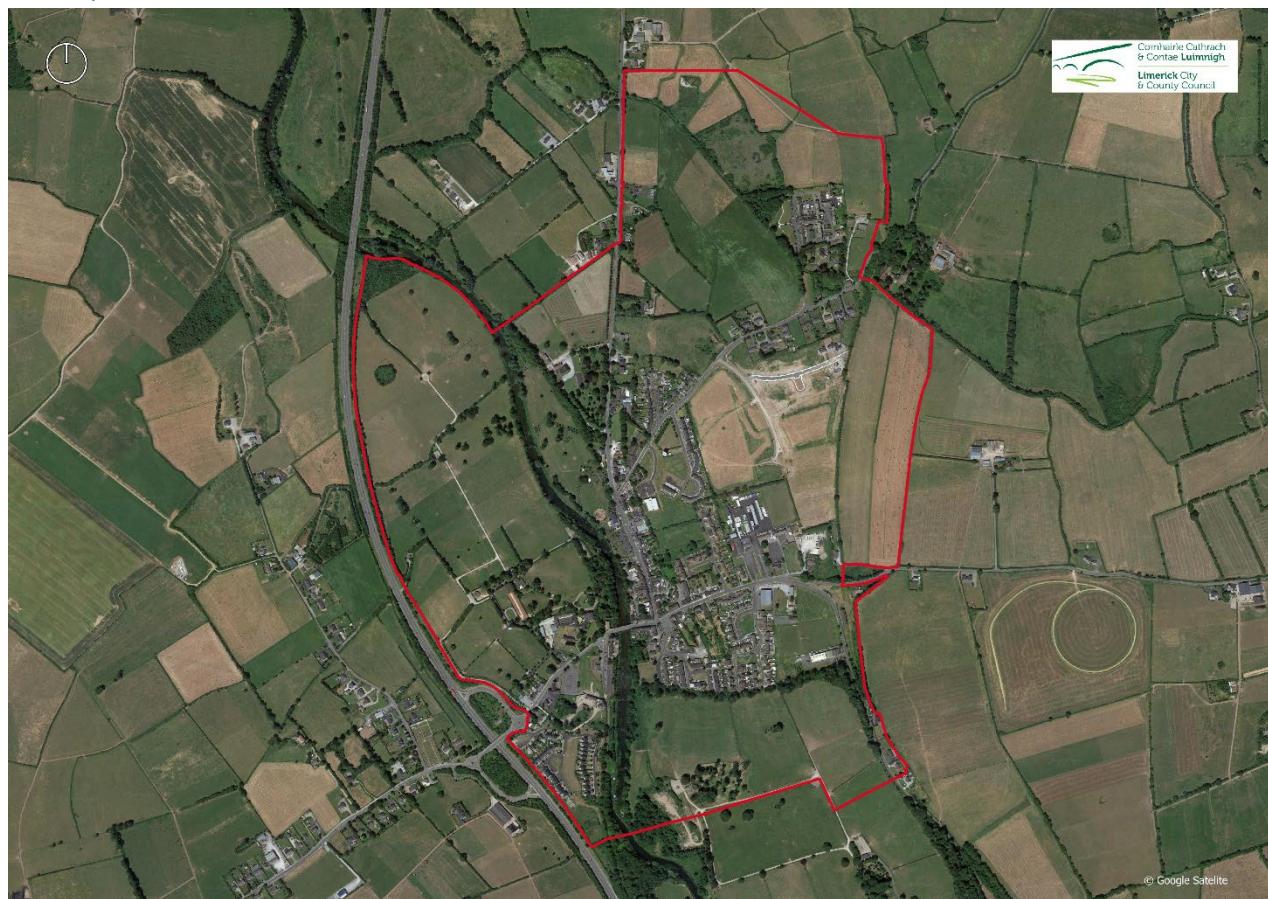
Following a four week consultation period with statutory environmental authorities, a final SEA Screening Determination has been made that the proposed extension to the Croom LAP, does not require full SEA.

For a summary of submissions on the SEA Screening and the response to same please see Section 3.2 of this report. A SEA screening determination has been prepared by Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) and will be published on the council website.

## 1.2 Description of the proposal and the context of the Croom LAP 2020-2026

The Croom Local Area Plan (LAP) 2020–2026 is the public statement of planning policies and objectives for future growth and development of the town. The Croom LAP was adopted by the Elected Members of the Adare - Rathkeale Municipal District the 3rd March 2020 and came into effect 14th April 2020. The Croom LAP was screened for SEA and AA in 2020. The LAP is due to expire in 2026. The total lands zoned is 158.17 hectares in the Croom LAP. According to the 2022 Census the population of Croom town is 1240 persons.

Fig. 1. Croom LAP Area 2020 – 2026 adopted April 2020 by Elected Members, Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District



Section 19 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides for the extension of the valid lifespan of a Local Area Plan, from a maximum of 6 years to an effective maximum of 10 years in total. The extension of the Local Area Plan timeframe is sought in order to provide certainty and opportunity to realise the objectives of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026 which are in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Refer to the Director General Report dated November 2024 to be considered by the Elected Member of the Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District which outlines the rationale for the extension of duration of the LAP and the consequent deferral of making a new LAP for Croom. The CE Report should be read in tandem with this report and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report that accompanies the CE Report to be considered by the Elected Members.

### 1.3 Overview of Croom LAP 2020- 2026

The LAP must be consistent with the objectives of the higher-level spatial plans, including the NPF, RSES and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 as varied.

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. The purpose of the NPF, together with the National Development Plan (NDP), form 'Project Ireland 2040' to enable all parts of Ireland, rural and urban, to successfully accommodate growth and change, shifting population and economic growth towards Ireland's regions and cities other than Dublin, whilst recognising Dublin's ongoing key role.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region. The RSES 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 Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028 as varied sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Limerick over a 6-year period to 2028. It is informed by the policy and objectives of the RSES and NPF, a public consultation process, collaboration with other agencies including Statutory Bodies and Government Departments, local level strategies, Ministerial Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Act, together with EU requirements, regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The Limerick Development Plan was adopted as a Reserved Function of the Elected Members of Limerick City and County Council on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and came into effect 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Variation No. 1 to the Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028 was adopted by the Elected Members on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023 comprising an amendment to Policy TR P11 Road Safety and Carrying Capacity of the non-national Road Network and Objective TR O37 Land Uses and Access Standards.

Informed by the RSES and the NPF, the Limerick Development Plan identifies Croom as a Level 4 Large Village (>500 population) which cater for the daily and weekly needs of its inhabitants and the needs of the surrounding wider catchment area. Level 4 settlements provide a range of employment opportunities and services appropriate to their size and function, such as secondary and primary schools, childcare facilities, sports grounds/complexes, libraries, Garda stations, medical centres and a good range of local services including shops, pubs, post offices and banks/credit unions.

The Croom LAP 2020 – 2026 as amended sets out a land use strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town of Croom, complying with the provisions of higher-level spatial plans. The LAP consists of a written statement and maps indicating objectives for zoning of land, residential development, economic development, community infrastructure, built and natural heritage, vacancy, regeneration, open space and recreation, active travel and transport, environmental protection and climate action. The total area of lands zoned in the Croom LAP is 158.17 hectares. This Plan also includes a Serviced Land Assessment, which informed the quantum and location of the land zoned in the Plan. The adoption of the LAP, and the proposed extension to the duration of the timeframe is a reserved function of Elected Members of the Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District. The Croom LAP underwent an AA, SEA and Flood Risk assessment in 2020. All the Plans in the hierarchy of spatial plans have undergone SEA and AA processes by the relevant competent authorities for each level of plan.

## 1.4 Local Area Plan 2020-2026 Proposed Extension

The proposed extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020– 2026 as amended to 2028 is a temporal expansion of the LAP. The main aim of this extension is to align the LAP with the wider County Development Plan.

## 2 Summary of Environmental Baseline

### 2.1 Introduction

Croom LAP is designed in a sensitive manner that incorporates the numerous factors considered pertinent to the continued use and development of modern village. This section provides a short summary of key environmental topics relevant to the Croom LAP.

### 2.2 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

The Croom Local Area plan is concerned with the village of Croom and its immediate surrounds in central Co. Limerick (See Fig. 1). The LAP covers an area of approximately 170 hectares, of which a total of 158.17 of lands are zoned. The town itself is an urban area that is surrounded by rural land. The landscape within the town is largely urban in nature with residential and commercial buildings as well as the associated infrastructure of roads, footpaths and amenity features. The town is situated in a lowland area surround by agricultural pasture land. The Maigue River flows through the town. The Maigue continues north before joining the Shannon near Kildimo. There is an amenity park within the town situated on the banks of the Maigue.

Man-made habitats within the Plan area are also important biodiversity areas. Gardens provide habitats for a range of wildlife including various floral species, birds, amphibians, invertebrates and mammals.

The footprint of the LAP area overlaps with no European site. However, as described above there is a hydrological connection to the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA through the Maigue.

There are records for a number of protected fauna species within the LAP area. Terrestrial mammal species such as Otter *Lutra lutra* and Badger *Meles meles* have been observed within the LAP area. There are also records for bat species such as Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu stricto*, Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Leisler's Bat *Nyctalus leisleri* and Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*. Numerous bird species have also been recorded using habitats within the LAP boundary. Of these Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and Whooper Swan *Cygnus Cygnus* are listed as Annex 1 of the birds directive.

### 2.3 Population and Human Health

In the 2022 Census the total population of Croom was 1240 persons. This represents an increase in total population in the village by approximately 81 persons over a 6-year period from 2016 (no. 1159).

The Croom Area LAP 2024-2028 will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Increase in demand for wastewater treatment at the municipal level;
- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction from the rivers;

- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality

## 2.4 Soil

The urban area of Croom village is dominated by heterogeneous urban soils. The agricultural landscape in the immediate surrounds of the village are comprised mainly of limestone till subsoil overlain by Luvisol, well drained mineral soils. Other types include Alluvial soils found in the vicinity of the Maigue and its tributaries.

## 2.5 Water

The Croom LAP area is located within the catchments of the River Maigue (Maigue\_SC\_040 and Maigue\_SC\_050). The Maigue River (EPA Code -24\_12986) and its tributary the Laskiltagh stream (EPA Code-24\_1120) are the main waterbodies that drain the area.

The quality status as measured under the Water Framework Directive of the River Maigue and the Laskiltagh stream are “poor”.

Agricultural intensification and wastewater treatment are significant water quality pressures in this area.

TABLE 1. WFD RIVER AND COASTAL WATERBODIES STATUS<sup>1</sup>

Waterbody Name	(EPA Identification Code)	WFD Surface Waterbody Status (2013 -2018)
The Maigue River	SC_040	Poor
the Laskiltagh stream	24_1120	Poor

### *Bathing waters*

There are no designated bathing waters in the area.

### *Flooding*

Certain areas within the village and the wider LAP are at risk from riverine flooding. The village straddles the banks of the River Maigue which is subject to periodic flooding.

The Croom LAP 2020-2026 was subject to a Flood Risk Assessment. There have been no changes or replacement of these national guidelines on flooding since the adoption of the LAP and there have been no significant flood events since the adoption of the Plan.

## 2.6 Air and Climatic Factors

The Climate Change Advisory Council’s Annual Review 2019 identifies that the most recent projections demonstrate that, under different assumptions, Ireland will not meet its emissions reduction targets, even with the additional policies and measures included in the National Development Plan. The projections also show that progress on reducing emissions is sensitive to the future path of fuel prices. A significant and sustained rate of emissions reduction of approximately -2.5% per year is required to

meet our objectives for 2050. However, it must be noted that additional measures within the recent Climate Action Plan are not included in the analysis to date.

### 2.6.1 LCCC Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2029

The Climate Change Action Plan for LCCC (2024-2029) sets out the following four targets:

- A 50% improvement in the Council's energy efficiency by 2030;
- A 51% reduction in the Council's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030;
- To make Limerick and Croom as a part of Limerick, a climate resilient region, by reducing the impacts of future climate change-related events
- To actively engage and inform citizens on climate change

### 2.6.2 Air Quality

The EPA's (2020) Air Quality in Ireland 2019 identifies that:

- Air quality in Ireland is generally good however there are localised issues;
- There was one exceedance of the EU annual average legal limit values in 2019 at one urban traffic station in Dublin due to pollution from transport;
- Ireland was above World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guideline value levels at 33 monitoring sites – mostly due to the burning of solid fuel in cities, towns and villages
- LCCC and the EPA have partnered to organize and facilitate the "Clean Air Together" initiative. The aim of this initiative is to use citizen science to help the measuring of air quality around Limerick City. Though Croom is not within the city, the results of the measurement and monitoring should be useful in extrapolation of air quality in the Croom area.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> and <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water>.

<sup>3</sup> EPA Report (2020) on Bathing Water Quality in Ireland for the year 2019

## 2.7 Material Assets

### *Green Infrastructure*

Parks and open space promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and a range of habitats for various species. Green infrastructure is also a crucial component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality. Croom currently has a 13 acre public amenity park and the continued use and maintenance of this is considered in the LAP.

### *Land*

The Plan seeks to assist with the reuse and regeneration of brownfield sites within and adjacent to the existing built-up footprint of the village thereby contributing towards sustainable mobility and reducing the need to develop greenfield lands and associated potential adverse environmental effects.

### *Forestry*

There are no areas of commercial forestry within the Croom LAP.

### *Coastline*

There is no coastline within the area of the Croom LAP. The River Maigue does provide the opportunity to undertake aquatic amenities such as angling. The relatively new slipway enables kayaking on the river also.

### *Renewable Energy Potential*

There is currently no land zoned for renewable energy development in the Croom LAP area.

### *Minerals and Aggregates*

There is currently no land zoned in the Croom LAP area for extractive industry. There is agricultural land within the LAP. While agricultural land is considered as “open for consideration” with regard to extractive industrial pursuits, all the agricultural land in the LAP area is currently in agricultural use.

### *Transport*

The Government’s policy Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future, the Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 (as extended) and the 30 year Mid – West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP) all point in the direction of improving existing transport infrastructure and designing new infrastructure that will make non car transport modes more attractive.

In Croom, circa 60% of the population travel to work, school or college by car. Given the location of the village and access The reduction of this figure to align with government led climate change objectives will be challenging in Croom for a number of reasons.

Croom is serviced by the N20 which provides access to the village to the north and west. The maintenance and enhancement of the Bus Routes on the N20 to provide access to the village is listed as a priority in the LAP.

### *Water Services*

The provision of adequate water supply and wastewater treatment utilities is crucial to the continued development and enhancement of Croom. The plant is operating effectively and currently compliant and but lacks the capacity to facilitate further connections. It has been included on a programme for the installation of a storm tank by Irish Water.

### **Waste Management**

Limerick City and County Council in collaboration with adjoining local authorities prepared the Southern Regional Waste Management Plan 2014 – 2020. The plan incorporates policies and objectives for waste management in the region. In Croom there is a public waste recycling facility located in the grounds of St Marys Church. The nearest civic recycling centre is located in Limerick City providing recycling facilities for a comprehensive range of waste materials.

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<sup>4</sup> THMs are chemicals which may be found in water treated with chlorine. The concentration of THMs in drinking water varies according to the level of organic material in the water, the amount of chlorine required to treat the water, and the temperature of the water being treated. Some water supplies have reported levels of THMs which are higher than the recommended levels. Irish Water is developing a National THM plan, in order to deal with this issue.

## 2.8 Cultural Heritage

### 2.8.1 Archaeological Heritage

The town of Croom is designated as an Historic Town and is entered on the Record of Monument and Places (LI030 – 025). As a Recorded Monument, it is protected under the National Monuments Act (1930 – 2004). It is the Council's policy to safeguard the value and setting of archaeological sites in Croom and to seek their preservation in situ or, and only where appropriate through advance archaeological excavation. In so doing the Council will liaise with the National Monuments Service, DEHLG, where any planning application is received within the Historic Town area or in the vicinity of the other Recorded Monuments.

### 2.8.2 Architectural Heritage

In the interest of safeguarding the cultural and built heritage, 26 structures have been identified for their contribution to the architectural heritage in the area and have been designated as 'protected structures' under Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000(Amended). These structures are included within the Record of Protected Structures (R.P.S) set out in the LAP.

## 2.9 Landscape

Croom possesses a varied landscape which is important not just for its intrinsic value and beauty, but also because it provides for local residents and visitors, both in terms of a place to live and for recreational and tourism purposes. The landscape of the area is taken into account and is protected by the LAP in the measures designed to protect archaeological, built and natural heritage.

## 2.10 Key Interactions and inter-relationships

There is a recognized interaction between the various parameters considered by SEA e.g. SEA parameters including biodiversity, water quality data and vulnerability, soil and geology, cultural heritage and landscape issues. These issues are dealt with individually and in tandem at a planning level and are considered broadly as part of SEA. The LAP and the proposed extension of the LAP aims to protect and where possible enhance each of these features individually and so any potential impact on any of these features arising due to development supported by the LAP will likely be positive.

### 3 SEA Screening Assessment

#### 3.1 Introduction to Assessment

The following section and table below present the SEA Screening assessment of the proposed extension of the Croom LAP against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2001-2011. These provide the basis 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 Croom LAP, supporting baseline documentation and the accompanying Habitats Directive Screening report.

TABLE 2. SEA SCREENING TABLE

Criteria for determining whether the proposed extension of Croom LAP is likely to have significant effects on the environment
<p><i>1. The characteristics of the Plan having regard, in particular, to:</i></p> <p><i>The degree to which the Plan 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>
<p>The Croom LAP is supported by a set of aims, actions and outcomes centered around a vision of promotion and enhancement of Croom and the interests of Croom as a village. The characteristics of the Plan do not set a framework for projects with a land use effect such as location, nature, size or operating conditions. The plan is a statutory plan. The aim is to establish a framework for the continued development of the Croom area as a high-level plan. However, the LAP cannot on its own, be used as a permission or be taken as contributory factor when assessing a planning permission request. As such no material change will occur as a direct result of this plan.</p> <p>Actions arising from the Plan will comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, and other licencing requirements as appropriate).</p>
<p><i>the degree to which the Plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,</i></p>
<p>The Croom LAP 2020-2026 is published for the entire Croom area and in particular those places contained within which are considered to be special or distinctive and the lived environment of all residents. It seeks to guide the work of the LCCC Heritage Office and LCCC cross-department activities that include heritage as well as setting out a framework for heritage activity across the community, volunteer and NGO sectors and for state agencies with a role in the heritage of the Croom area within Limerick.</p>
<p><i>the relevance of the Plan in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,</i></p>

The overall aim of the original LAP extension is to provide a framework for coordinated development planning of the Croom area. The vision of the Plan involves the inclusion of all residents and tourists, safeguarding and building capacity.

The key objectives and underlying goals and actions in the LAP are positive in relation to developmental, cultural heritage, population and human health, biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil and landscapes.

The extension of the LAP to 2028 is a temporal expansion of an extant plan. The main aim of the extension is to bring the LAP into alignment with the wider County Development Plan.

Therefore, the plan and the proposed extension of the plan is relevant in relation to contributing to and promoting sustainable development.

#### *Environmental problems relevant to the Plan*

There are no key environmental problems identified as relevant to the Plan.

The ultimate goal of Croom LAP 2020-2026 is to promote the development and enhancement of Croom village for its residents while seeking to preserve and augment all natural and cultural heritage by guiding planning decisions and relevant sector investors in making decisions. This is in alignment with the Strategic Environmental Objectives under LCCC County Development Plan 2022-2028, and the LCCC Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2029.

#### *The relevance of the Plan in the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).*

The Croom LAP and the proposed extension to the LAP focuses on development of the Croom area in a sustainable and legally compliant way. The plan complements EU legislation such as Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. It enables clear decision making at planning level with regard to the relevant environmental legislation.

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

*the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,*

The Croom LAP 2020-2026 and the proposed extension to 2028 sets out specific aims, actions and outcomes for the coordinated management of the development of the Croom area until 2028. There are no specific land use effects identified through the aims and actions, with all of them generating positive, long-term and synergistic effects across a range of SEA parameters. Should conflicts arise from the Croom LAP, these will be subject to full planning and environmental assessment consent.

*the cumulative nature of the effects,*

At this point the action measures are not spatially specific and direct land use effects are not identified. Should projects arise from the proposed extension to the Croom LAP they will be subject to more detailed project level assessment and in compliance with the statutory planning and environmental consenting regime. At this strategic, county scale no potential for adverse cumulative effects is identified as a result.

*the trans boundary nature of the effects*

At this point the action measures are not spatially specific and direct land use effects are not identified. Should projects arise from the proposed extension to the Croom LAP they will be subject to more detailed project level assessment and in compliance with the statutory planning and environmental consenting regime. At this strategic scale no potential for transboundary effects are identified for the proposed extension to the Croom LAP.

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

No such risks are identified as arising from the plan. Actions relating to public are positive in relation to human health and wellbeing as it aims to enhance the living conditions and services accessible to the citizens of Croom. Any other actions linked through the proposed extension of the Croom LAP to the improvement of other SEOs such as biodiversity and landscape would benefit population and human health more broadly.

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

The Croom LAP and the proposed extension to that plan is small in scale, only taking into consideration the village of Croom and its immediate surrounds. The aim of the Croom LAP is to establish a framework for the continued development of the Croom area as a high-level plan. However, the LAP cannot on its own, be used as a permission or be taken as contributory factor when assessing a planning permission request. As such no material change will occur as a direct result of this plan.

*the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*

a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The proposed extension of the Croom LAP has the same objectives and ideals as the original plan. It is a temporal expansion of this plan aimed at bringing the LAP into alignment with the wider county development plan. There is no change to land zoning and therefore no direct landuse implications will arise as a result of this plan. The plan does not directly impact any Natura 2000 sites, pNHAs or locally important biodiversity sites and other important areas such as rivers, streams, and wildlife corridors, but aims to broadly ensure the status of Strategic Environmental Objectives relating to biodiversity, flora and fauna are protected and considered through sustainable development.

Archaeological or built heritage sites associated with the rivers, lakes and coastal waters are afforded protection for cultural heritage namely through the record of protected structures or sites and monuments record. A screening statement in support of Appropriate Assessment has also been prepared for this plan in line with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). A finding of no likely significant effects has been concluded as part of this screening statement in support of Appropriate Assessment.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

The Croom LAP and the proposed extension of the plan does not provide consent, for planning permission requests. Any plan/project arising as a result of this plan will be subject to appropriate assessment and environmental impact assessment as the plans for these projects are developed.

In order to be realised, potential projects or proposals arising from the Croom LAP will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework.

(c) intensive land-use,

No specific areas are identified for landuse effects or development activities in the plan. No change in land current land uses are forthcoming as a result of the proposed extension to the currently in use Croom LAP. A number of actions in the Croom LAP and the proposed extension to the plan may have implications for soil or landscape. Such actions are positive in relation to planning and conserving heritage and generating positive interactions with SEOs, including biodiversity, water and soil.

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

A screening statement in support of Appropriate Assessment has been prepared in tandem with this SEA Screening and the following conclusion has been provided:

The Screening of the proposed extension of the Croom LAP as set out above shows that the plan will not result in land use activities that have the potential to result in negative impacts to the qualifying features of interest of European Sites occurring within or surrounding the plan area and will not have the potential to compromise the achievement of the conservation objective of these European Sites.

In light of the findings of this report it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded that the Plan is not likely, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives and on the basis of best scientific evidence and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to that conclusion.

## 3.2 Summary of Consultation with Environmental Authorities

In accordance with Article 14A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive and the SEA Planning Regulations Limerick City and County Council invited environmental stakeholders to make a submission or observation in relation to whether or not the deferral of making a new LAP for Croom would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, prior to the Council making a determination.

A notice via email to the Environmental Authorities including; The EPA, The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, under Article 14 A (4) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) was issued by Limerick City and County Council on 17th September 2024 inviting written submissions on the proposed extension of duration for the Croom LAP. Contained within the notice, the deadline for submissions was by 15th October 2024.

A submission was received from the EPA in relation to the proposed extension of Croom LAP. A number of points were outlined in this submission. These points are outlined in the below table. No other submissions were received from any other stakeholders by the deadline, October 15<sup>th</sup> 2024 in relation to the extension of duration of the Croom LAP.

**Table 3- Summary of consultation with EPA**

Name/Group:	Environmental Protection Agency
Submission:	Response
<p><b>1.</b> The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promotes the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan and advocates that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are considered and addressed, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan.</p> <p><b>2.</b> The EPA's guidance document "SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources", assists Local Authorities to incorporate relevant recommendations as relevant and appropriate to the Plan.</p> <p><b>3. SEA Determination</b> If an SEA determination hasn't been made regarding the plan or programme a determination should be made on whether implementing the plan or programmes would be likely to have significant effect on the environment. Guidance documentation on the</p>	<p>1. Noted - this report relates to the extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026.</p> <p>2. Noted - this report relates to the extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026.</p> <p>3. Noted - this report relates to the extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026 and is accompanied by a SEA screening carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance.</p>

<p>SEA process is available on the EPA website and it is recommended that this is taken into account in the making of the SEA Determination.</p> <p><b>4. EPA SEA Screening Guidance</b> EPA recommends the use of Good Practice Guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening.</p> <p><b>5. Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Planning Authorities:</b> EPA recommends the use of The Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities.</p> <p><b>6. Sustainable Development</b> The Council should ensure that the implementing of the Plan or programme is consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development and national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Local Area Plan is required to be consistent with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.</p> <p>Compliance is also required with the OPW's The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.</p> <p><b>7. State of the Environment Report – Ireland's Environment 2024</b> The recommendations of the State of the Environment Report <i>Ireland's Environment</i>, due to be published in October 2024 should be integrated into the plan over its lifetime.</p> <p>Available guidance and resources are outlined for the assistance of the Local Authority, including an SEA WebGis Tool.</p>	<p>4. Noted – this report relates to the extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026 and is accompanied by a SEA screening carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance.</p> <p>5. Noted – as above.</p> <p>6. Noted</p> <p>7. Noted</p>
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<p>Any future amendments to the Plan should be screened for likely significant effects, using the same method as applied to the environmental assessment carried out to inform this plan.</p> <p>The Local Authority are required to ensure that the plan complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and where an Appropriate Assessment is required the findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the plan or programme. The EPA AA GeoTool is referenced here as a resource.</p> <p><b>8. Environmental Authorities</b>  Under the SEA Regulations, the Council should consult with: the Environmental Protection Agency; Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and any adjoining planning authority, whose area is contiguous to the area of the Planning Authority, which prepared the proposed plan, proposed variation or local area plan.</p> <p><b>9. SEA Determination</b>  After the making of a determination on whether SEA is required or not a copy of the decision including reasons shall be made available for public inspection and a copy sent to the relevant environmental authorities.</p>	<p>8. Noted – The Planning Authority have consulted with the Environmental Authorities and adjoining counties in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>9. Noted – this report relates to the extension of duration of the Croom Local Area Plan 2020-2026. This Mayor's Report and associated screening document will be made available to view on the Council's website.</p>
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### 3.3 SEA Screening Determination

Section 9 (1) of the (2004) Regulations (S.I. No. 435) (as amended) states “*subject to sub-article (2), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes*

*(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or*

*(b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site.”.*

The proposed extension of the Croom LAP aims to provide a roadmap for guiding the development in a sustainable manner of the Croom village and its surrounds.

The overarching aim of this plan is to provide a framework for the continued sustainable development of Croom village and its immediate surrounds. In order to be realised, potential projects or proposals arising from the Croom LAP and the proposed extension to the same will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent granting framework, of which the plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

In relation to Section 9 (1) of the (2004) Regulations (S.I. No. 435) (b) which relates to the findings of the Screening Statement in support of Appropriate Assessment, a finding of no likely significant effects on the conservation management objectives of European Sites has been determined.

Therefore, LCCC, informed by the conclusions contained in the attached report, conclude that the proposed extension of the Croom LAP does not give rise to significant adverse environmental effects, and the proposed extension to the Croom LAP does not require full SEA.

#### 3.3.1 Consultation with specified environmental authorities

In line with SI 435 of 2011, the plan and accompanying SEA Screening reports were issued to the statutory consultees for a four-week period as described above in this report.

These submissions have been noted in the SEA Screening Determination and in summary a final determination has been made following consultation that full SEA is not required. This is the final determination of the SEA Screening of the proposed extension to the Croom Local Area Plan.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Vincent Murray**

**Director of Services – Planning and Place-making**

**Date:**

