



## Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

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### **Draft Framework for the Longford Local Economic and Community Plan**

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly notes the publication of the draft framework document for the Longford Local Economic and Community Plan and sets out hereunder observations on behalf of the Regional Assembly. The submission has been prepared by the executive of the Regional Assembly and approved by the elected members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

#### **1.0 Overall Context**

##### **1.1 Role and Function of the Regional Assembly**

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland. It is primarily focused on driving regional development through the formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), oversight and coordination of County Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), management of EU Programmes, EU project participation, implementation of national economic policy and additional functions working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission. As a strategic policy body, EMRA also participates in the consultation processes of other relevant strategic plans and policies.

This submission relates to the statutory role of the Assembly regarding the Longford Local Economic and Community Plan.

##### **1.2 Legislative Context**

Section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (amending Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001), provides that every Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) shall be consistent with any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy as well as the City/County Development Plan that applies to the area of the LECP. It also states that the Local Authority shall submit a draft of the economic and community elements of the LECP to the Regional Assembly and it shall adopt a statement on the draft Plan for consideration by the Elected Members of that Local Authority.

The Act requires that the consideration of a draft plan by the Regional Assembly, shall relate to its consistency with—

- (i) the core strategy and the objectives of the development plan of the local authority concerned,
- (ii) any regional spatial and economic strategy that may apply, and
- (iii) the need to consider consistency between the economic and community elements of the draft plan.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) Guidelines 2021, published in November 2021, assist with the preparation of the draft LECPs, with a key focus on sustainability, consultation and engagement with local communities and businesses. The guidelines also require local authorities to consider housing needs when formulating both the economic and community elements of their LECPs in accordance with the commitment in Housing for All, the Government’s national plan for housing to 2030.

The LECP process consists of two parts: the development of an overall LECP framework detailing the High-Level Goals and sustainable community and economic objectives, including outcomes for a six-year period; and the development of Implementation Plans of the objectives of the LECP.

### **1.3 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region**

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region was made by the Members of the Assembly in June 2019 and is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth throughout the Region. The overall vision of the Strategy is to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunity for all. The vision is supported by sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) that are framed around three key principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity.

A primary statutory objective of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), alignment with the investment priorities of the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (and thus Project Ireland 2040), by coupling new development with the requisite investment in services and infrastructure. The RSES is of critical importance for the delivery of Project Ireland 2040, given that it is the succeeding tier of policy delivery in Ireland.

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region presents a Spatial Strategy, devised and informed by a complementary Economic Strategy, which provides a framework for future growth, ensuring the delivery of effective regional development through the realisation of viable and vital places. This includes championing the capital city of Dublin as a smart, climate resilient and global city region; identifying Regional Growth Centres which act as regional economic drivers and supports for their wider catchment areas; and promoting a network of large economically active Key Towns that provide employment and services to their surrounding areas. All of this is supported by Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, Self-Sustaining Towns and a network of multifaceted Rural Places.

As outlined in the RSES the Key Town of Longford is located in the Gateway Region and is a large economically active town providing important connections with adjoining regions with the capacity and future growth potential to accommodate above average growth in tandem with the requisite investment in employment creation, services, amenities and sustainable transport. Longford, a County Town, is strategically located on the N4/M4 motorway and the Dublin to Sligo rail line, acting as a portal to the northern and western region and providing a supporting role to the regional growth centre of Athlone. Key priorities for the town as outlined in the RSES are to promote compact growth, the regeneration of the town centre and to expand Longford's role as a hub for enterprise, employment and tourism.

With respect to compact growth and regeneration, one of the key focuses for the settlement is to encourage the provision of high-quality housing development at the right locations to ensure societal benefits and the sustainability and enhancement of facilities such as schools, shops, recreation facilities and open spaces. A number of strategic areas have been identified in the town that can act as regenerative catalysts increasing the residential, economic and leisure potential of the town centre, whilst also addressing vacancy, derelict buildings and enhancing the vibrancy of the town. Key areas include the Camlin Quarter and Ballyminion areas with further strategic sites throughout, including possibilities within the southern quarter of the town. There are also opportunities for improved links between both ends of the town and enhanced rejuvenation of, and connections between, the Royal Canal Greenway and the former location of the canal harbour around the Market Square.

Longford town acts as a key employment centre with strong retail, administrative and service functions that serve a wide catchment. The development of a creative and innovation hub and co-working space on the Main Street also offers further opportunity to drive enterprise development and entrepreneurship in the town. In addition, the RSES refers to the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economic Project, a collaboration between the Cavan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon local authorities with ESB and Bord na Móna, providing the opportunity to deliver cross regional economic projects. The RSES states that social inclusion will be key to supporting greater participation in local community and economic development and to addressing higher levels of unemployment and deprivation in the town.

The Economic Strategy of the RSES has five key principles which include smart specialisation, clustering, placemaking, orderly growth and future proof. This Strategy includes a retail hierarchy for the Region, as outlined in the RSES under Chapter 6 Table 6.1, which identifies Longford town as Level 2 [Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres], and Granard as Level 3 [Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)] within the retail hierarchy.

## **2.0 Overview of the draft Framework LECP**

The draft Framework document for the Longford LECP was received on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and contains the following sections:

- Foreword and Executive Summary
- A Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- Development and preparation of the LECP

- Longford at a Glance
- Community Participation
- High Level Goals SCO Analysis
- Vision, High-Level Goals, Objectives and Outcomes
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Appendices

The Framework document sets out the following vision statement;

*“A County that capitalises on economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all.”*

The overall direction of the draft LECP is guided by High-Level Goals. These goals provide the core aims of the LECP and represent how Longford should grow over the lifetime of the plan. The High-Level Goals were developed to reflect the socio-economic analysis undertaken and to align with existing policies and plans. The High-Level Goals were refined through consultation with the public, as well as internal and external stakeholders.

The six High-Level Goals, which are supported by listed objectives and outcomes, are stated as follows:

- Goal 1: Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health.
- Goal 2: A resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued.
- Goal 3: An innovative economy, maximising opportunities through education and training, smart technology and digitalisation.
- Goal 4: A strong economy that positions Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn.
- Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life.
- Goal 6: A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, building on Longford’s strengths and resources.

The draft Framework document also contains sections on the preparation of the plan, including public consultation. In addition, implementation will include regular monitoring and review, and implementation plans will be developed for a two-year period (for a total of three implementation plans over the lifetime of the LECP) in accordance with the LECP Guidelines 2021. The content of the draft Framework document will be discussed in the following sections of this report.

### **3.0 Evaluation of Consistency with the RSES**

The draft Framework document has been prepared having regard to the recommendations set out in the LECP Guidelines 2021. In this regard, the following are noted from the draft Framework plan submitted to EMRA for consideration.

#### **3.1 Policy Context**

Section 1.3 Policy Alignment of the draft Framework document outlines that the LECP is the primary mechanism for delivering national and regional goals at the local level. Section 1.3 refers to Appendix B for a comprehensive list of related policy documents however the appendix has not been provided therefore this matter should be addressed. Notwithstanding this, the Regional Assembly considers that Section 1.3 of the draft Framework document should explicitly reference national policy and regional policy, in particular referencing the key priorities of the RSES in relation to County Longford.

The draft Framework document identifies Longford town as a Key Town within the RSES with strong retail, administrative and service functions. It recognises Longford town's strategic location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5; and its proximity to the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone; which supports its role as a strategic employment centre (aligning with Regional Policy Objective, RPO 4.63). It also recognises that the town is a priority area for compact growth, town centre regeneration, enterprise, employment and tourism.

The draft Framework document recognises the need to enhance accessibility and sustainable mobility within Longford town centre, which demonstrates consistency with RPO 4.59 of the RSES, and similarly the importance of tourism in Longford is addressed in the draft Framework document which demonstrates consistency with RPO 4.60 of the RSES. In this respect the draft Framework document outlines that Longford has a growing tourism industry due to its good proximity to natural amenities, recreational opportunities and the Town's location on the Rebel Longford Trail. Furthermore, the County has a large number of tourism opportunities such as the Center Parcs resort.

The draft Framework document makes reference to key spatial planning, economic, social and community elements of the policies and objectives of the RSES, including the Longford Key Town RPOs 4.59-4.63, in order to demonstrate consistency with same, which is welcomed by the Regional Assembly.

The draft Framework document also references the rural economy in Longford, and states that while Longford currently has a more traditional rural economy, there has been significant growth in employment in IDA companies, and an increased focus on innovation, with capacity for growth in research and enterprise development. This is reflected in High-Level Goal 3 of the draft Framework document which focuses on an innovative economy with opportunities to diversify the rural economy. This aligns with RPO 6.5 of the RSES where local authorities explore projects in LECPs for the enhancement of the competitiveness of their rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

The Regional Assembly considers that the draft LECP could be enhanced further by setting out the retail hierarchy for the Region, as outlined in the RSES under Chapter 6, Table 6.1 which identifies

Longford Town as Level 2 [Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres], and Granard as Level 3 [Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)] within the retail hierarchy.

Overall, however, the Regional Assembly considers the policy considerations to be consistent with the policies and objectives of the RSES in so far as it relates to County Longford.

### **3.2 Socio-Economic Profile, SCOT Analysis and Consultation Process**

Section 3 'Longford at a Glance' of the draft Framework document contains a summary of the Longford socio-economic profile which contains detailed up-to-date Census information on housing, demographics, social indicators, educational attainment, economy and employment statistics and environmental figures with key facts outlined for each area, using data such as the Labour Force Survey, Live Register, Pobal, Enterprise Ireland, Tusla, RSES, National Household Surveys, and other up-to-date statistics sourced from local governmental bodies and state agencies. The Census 2022 recorded a population for Longford of 46,751 which was 14.5% higher than the previous census, and Longford recorded the highest rate of population growth of any administrative County between the last two censuses. Census 2022 also outlined that the housing stock in Longford was 19,195 residential units and that despite decreasing from 16.7% in 2016 to 14.1% in 2022, the vacancy rate in Longford is still higher than the State average (10.9%).

A detailed list of Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) Analysis for County Longford has also been outlined within the draft LECP, which is welcomed by the Regional Assembly.

The draft Framework document states that public consultation was invited during October and November 2022 and that a variety of engagement methods were provided to ensure access to the public consultation process was inclusive. Both in-person and online consultation methods were used. The Socio-Economic Statement prepared by Longford County Council was utilised to support the public consultation phase and ensure people were informed of the LECP process. An online public survey was widely advertised where a total of 56 submissions were received; submissions were invited by email or post. Three dedicated drop-in open information and feedback sessions were held, one in each Municipal District. Feedback from the consultation process informed the High-Level Goals, SCO, the SEDOs and their associated actions. The draft Framework document provides a summary of the consultation findings which outlined that the main areas to be improved related to public transport, housing and safety.

### **3.3 High-Level Goals, Objectives, Actions and Outputs**

The Regional Assembly notes that the analysis of the socio-economic profile of the County, the public consultation and the preparation of the vision of the draft LECP have resulted in the formulation of draft High-Level Goals and accompanying objectives, actions and outputs, which will inform the actions to be determined as part of the Implementation Plan. The LECP Guidelines 2021 recommend that High-Level Goals should be achievable and realistic. A Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities (SCO) Analysis has been used to inform the development of each High-Level Goal.

Each High-Level Goal has related Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) and Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs). These SCOs and SEDOs are key priority areas within each High-Level

Goal. Like the High-Level Goals, the development of the objectives was informed by consultation with the community and stakeholders, as well as by the socio-economic analysis.

Overall, the Regional Assembly is satisfied with the selection of the six High-Level goals and the stated objectives, based on the evidence-based approach used and the socio-economic profile which was used to develop the goals. The Regional Assembly is satisfied that the chosen goals align with the 3 Key Principles of the RSES, the 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) of the RSES and with a number of relevant RPOs of the RSES. Notwithstanding, the Regional Assembly considers it appropriate that a specified Implementation Plan, detailing how the proposed objectives and outcomes of the draft High-Level Goals are to be achieved and measured, as required by the LECP Guidelines 2021, is prepared and forms part of the final LECP document.

Each High-Level goal is discussed in detail below:

Goal 1 - Healthy communities, where people live active and fulfilling lives with improved physical and mental health:

This High-Level Goal of healthy communities contains the following Sustainable Community Objective (SCO) and Sustainable Economic Development Objective (SEDO):

SCO 1.1: Promote and support health service providers and initiatives that promote health and wellbeing.

SEDO 1.2: Promote and support active and passive recreation and associated industries.

The objectives outlined above support the Key Principle of Healthy Placemaking as outlined in the RSES, including RSO 4 of the RSES in relation to healthy communities. They also demonstrate consistency with Healthy Placemaking RPOs 9.10 - 9.13, RPO 9.23 in relation to facilitating the development of health service providers catering for an aging population, with RPO 9.1 in relation to public spaces, age friendly and family friendly strategies, and with the recreation and open space RPOs in the RSES, listed as RPOs 9.14 - 9.17.

Goal 2 - A resilient environment and communities, where people are and feel safe and valued:

This High-Level Goal of resilient environment and communities contains the following SCOs and SEDOs:

SCO 2.1 Support communities, organisations and enterprises to participate in climate action.

SCO 2.2 Support, encourage and promote community safety.

SEDO 2.3 Support the enhancement and protection of biodiversity, natural resources and waterways.

High-Level Goal 2 aligns with RSOs 9-11 of the RSES in relation to low carbon, green infrastructure and biodiversity, with RPOs 7.22-7.23 in relation to green infrastructure, RPOs 7.24-7.25 in relation to greenways, blueways and peatways, RPO 7.7 in relation to air quality, RPO 7.32 in relation to climate change, RPO 7.43 in relation to resilience of critical infrastructure and RPOs 7.16, 7.17 and 7.19 in relation to biodiversity and natural heritage.

Goal 3 - An innovative economy, maximizing opportunities through education and training, smart technology and digitalization:

This High-Level Goal of an innovative economy contains the following SCOs and SEDOs;

SCO 3.1 Develop and support pathways for education, training and lifelong learning for all community members.

SCO 3.2 Enable individuals and communities to optimise digital connectivity and proficiencies.

SEDO 3.3 Promote and nurture a strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

SEDO 3.4 Capitalise on strengths of Longford through Smart Specialisation and Digitalisation for businesses and enterprises.

The objectives of High-Level Goal 3 support the Key Principle of Economic Opportunity and also the five principles of the Economic Strategy of the RSES which are listed as smart specialisation, clustering, placemaking, orderly growth and future proof. The objectives also align with RSO 12 in relation to a strong economy supported by enterprise and innovation and RSO 13 in relation to improving education skills and social inclusion. In addition, the goal supports RPOs of the RSES including RPO 6.26 and 6.27 in relation to skills and innovation, RPO 6.38 in relation to lifelong learning programmes, business supports and upskilling, RPO 8.25 in relation to broadband and digital infrastructure, RPO 9.22 which aims to support the role of Higher Education Institutions and Educational Training Boards in addressing skills shortages and life-long learning needs in the Region, and to support the further development of multi-campus Technological Universities to drive research and innovation, and RPO 6.2 to ensure LECPs are sufficiently agile to account to unexpected opportunities and to accommodate propositions for enterprise development that may emerge.

Goal 4 - A strong economy that positions Longford as a destination of choice to live, work, visit, invest and learn:

This High-Level Goal of a strong economy contains the following SEDOs;

SEDO 4.1 Increase employment supports and opportunities.

SEDO 4.2 Build on opportunities for clustering of key economic sectors, including Medtech, engineering, agri-food and tourism.

SEDO 4.3 Maintain and promote a positive business environment for Longford that enhances its appeal as a viable business location.

SEDO 4.4 Sustain/expand new and existing businesses, social enterprises and entrepreneurs in County Longford.

SEDO 4.5 Enhance Longford as a tourism destination, attracting more visitors and improving the local economy.

This High-Level Goal aims to ensure that Longford is a desirable place to live, visit, and do business and includes the following themes: supporting the clustering of key economic industries, increased promotion and encouraging new investment, ongoing support for enterprises and entrepreneurs, and improved strategic infrastructure.

High-Level Goal 4 aligns with RPOs 6.19 - 6.20 in the RSES in relation to tourism, RPO 6.5 in relation to the rural economy, RPO 4.61 in supporting physical regeneration, RPO 4.63 to support Longford town as a strategic portal to the northwest and south and to support its role as a strategic employment centre, RPO 8.6 in relation to transport plans and RPO 4.27 in relation to Key Towns.



Goal 5 - Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities, with a strong sense of place and improved quality of life:

This High-Level Goal of vibrant, inclusive and connected communities contains the following SCOs and SEDO;

SCO 5.1 Reduce barriers leading to social exclusion and celebrate our vibrant and diverse communities.

SCO 5.2 Support increased community participation and social capital.

SCO 5.3 Increase joined up thinking and collaboration among agencies and organisations across the County.

SCO 5.4 Promotion and preservation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage of Longford.

SEDO 5.5 Revitalise, regenerate and support pride of place in our urban and rural towns and villages.

This High-Level Goal aims to ensure communities are vibrant and inclusive across County Longford and includes the following themes: continued and increased social inclusion, encouraging community participation, promoting joined up thinking and development, supporting the arts, heritage and culture, continued town and village revitalisation and regeneration.

Healthy Placemaking is one of the key principles of the RSES and the RSES highlights that the availability of, and access to, services is key to healthier places. In this respect, this High-Level Goal will promote increased community participation and greater social capital through support for related policies, strategies and programmes (including Age-Friendly Longford, and the Longford Children and Young People's Plan), and will support the ongoing work of Longford's Volunteer Centre and promote the work of the Longford Public Participation Network. Furthermore, High-Level Goal 5 aligns with RSO 5 Creative Places and several RPOs including RPO 9.1 in relation to age and family friendly strategies, RPO 9.19 regarding social infrastructure needs, RPOs 4.61, 9.8 and 9.9 in relation to supporting the regeneration of Longford as a Key Town and RPOs 6.12-6.14 in relation to town centre renewal.

Goal 6 - A sustainable County with a growing Green Economy, building on Longford's strengths and resources:

This High-Level Goal of vibrant, inclusive and connected communities contains the following SEDOs;

SEDO 6.1 Support increased resilience and sustainability of Longford's existing enterprises and infrastructure.

SEDO 6.2 Support the development of the Green Economy:

High-Level Goal 6 of the draft Framework document identifies that the economic landscape is transitioning to more eco-friendly practices, and therefore it is important that employees in traditional industries, including agriculture, forestry and extractive industries, are not left behind. In this respect the draft Framework document highlights that County Longford is eligible for funding through the EU Just Transition Fund, which totals €169 million. This fund will be allocated to projects across the Midlands providing new green jobs, the development of affordable green energy, the decarbonisation of local transport, and the roll-out of new tourism enterprises. It will also support investment in

sustainable agriculture and forestry, the development of SMEs and start-ups, as well as support for research and innovation.

This High-Level Goal supports the Key Principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity outlined in the RSES, including RSOs in relation to integrated transport and land use (RSO 6), enhanced strategic connectivity (RSO 15), building climate resilience (RSO 8), supporting the transition to low carbon and clean energy (RSO 9), enhancing green infrastructure (RSO 10) and biodiversity and natural heritage (RSO 11). The High-Level Goal is concerned with ensuring existing infrastructure is upgraded and can support advances in sustainability technology and in this respect it demonstrates consistency with RPO 8.7 in relation to mobility management and more sustainable transport use, RPOs 8.2 and 8.3 in relation to the integration of transport and land use planning, RPO 6.31 in relation to innovation capacity to create a distributed network of co-working hubs, and RPOs 8.25 and 8.26 relating to communications networks and digital infrastructure. This High-Level Goal also supports the Climate Change RPOs of the RSES; RPOs 7.30 - 7.34 and the support for a Just Transition to clean energy as outlined in the RSES Climate Strategy Figure 7.4.

Furthermore, the Goal aligns with several RPOs in the RSES such as RPO 3.7 in relation to sustainable growth, RPO 6.24 in relation to agriculture, RPO 7.35 – 7.38 in relation to decarbonising the energy sector and RPOs 7.39 - 7.41 in relation to low energy buildings. SEDO 6.2 above also supports RPO 6.23 relating to low carbon and circular economy and objectives for green infrastructure and greenways as listed under RPOs 7.22 - 7.25. The objectives also support RPOs in the RSES for biodiversity and natural heritage; RPOs 7.16, 7.17 and 7.19.

### **3.4 Implementation**

Section 7.0 of the draft Framework document sets out details on how the plan will be monitored and reviewed for progression. It states that monitoring of the Implementation Plans will be undertaken regularly by an independent working group of local enterprise, innovation and community stakeholders and the LECP will be delivered through a series of three two-year Implementation Plans to achieve the targets set out. The draft Framework document also states that monitoring of Implementation Plans will be undertaken on an ongoing basis, with a report prepared and submitted to the Longford LCDC every two years, and interim reviews will also take place in 2025 and 2027.

From a review of the draft Framework document, a specific Implementation Plan has not clearly been provided for assessment. Section 6 of the draft document outlines actions for each High-Level Goal however it is not specifically referred to as an Implementation Plan. In the interests of clarity, the Assembly notes that an Implementation Plan is required by the LECP Guidelines 2021 and should therefore be prepared and form part of the draft LECP document.

## **4.0 Evaluation of Consistency with the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027**

Section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 (amending Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001) states that LECPs should be consistent with the core strategy and objectives of the Development Plan, in this respect the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027. Given that the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 was deemed to be consistent with the RSES, the

Regional Assembly therefore considers that an analysis of the RSES is deemed sufficient in order to demonstrate consistency. Notwithstanding this, it is considered beneficial if the LECP Framework document could address the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 in more detail to demonstrate that it aligns with and complements the policies and objectives and identified priorities in the County Development Plan.

## **5.0 Other Considerations**

Additional considerations in relation to the draft Framework document have been noted as follows;

- Paragraphs have been repeated under SCO 5.2 within the draft Framework document.
- Appendices have not been included with the documentation received.

It is considered appropriate that these matters should be adequately addressed within the final Framework document.

## **6.0 Recommendation and Statement of Consistency**

The Regional Assembly commends the work of Longford County Council to date in the preparation of the draft Framework document of the LECP and issues a Statement of Consistency for the Longford LECP as required under Section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act (as amended) subject to the following recommendations:

- The LECP should make specific reference to Climate Action within the heading of High-Level Goal 6 to demonstrate a clear link to this Key Principle of the RSES.
- The LECP should make reference to the retail hierarchy for the Region, as outlined in the RSES Chapter 6 Table 6.1 which identifies Longford Town as Level 2 [Major Town Centres and County (Principal) Town Centres], and Granard as Level 3 [Town and/or District Centres and Sub-County Town Centres (Key Service Centres)] within the retail hierarchy.
- The LECP should include a specific Implementation Plan that is prepared and presented in accordance with the requirements of Section B of the LECP Guidelines 2021. This may be included as an appendix of the LECP.
- The LECP is required to be consistent with the core strategy and objectives of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027. It is recommended that an additional section is included to clearly demonstrate this.
- Section 1.3 in the draft Framework document entitled 'Policy Alignment' should be expanded upon to explicitly reference national policy and regional policy, in particular referencing the key priorities of the RSES in relation to County Longford.
- Paragraphs have been repeated under SCO 5.2 within the Framework document; this should be amended.
- The appendices of the LECP should be included. Public consultation information, a list of written submissions and the membership of relevant structures (LCDC, SPC), as detailed in Appendix 2 of the LECP Guidelines 2021, should be provided.

## 7.0 Conclusion

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) welcomes the progression of the Local Economic and Community Plan to a draft Framework document and considers the economic and community objectives to be consistent with the RSES and the Longford CDP 2021-2027. However, as outlined above, it is considered that the draft Framework document could demonstrate better integration of key references to, and stronger links, with policies and objectives of the RSES and the Longford CDP 2021-2027. Subject to the amendments listed in Section 6.0 of this report being incorporated into the finalised LECP, the Regional Assembly considers that the document would be consistent with the policies and objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 and the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Regards,



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Clare Bannon

A/Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

10<sup>th</sup> November 2023