

SEA Submissions
EU and International Planning Regulation Unit
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Custom House
Dublin

30th November 2020

Our Ref: 201102.1

Re. SEA Screening for the Proposed Update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Dear Sir / Madam,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 23rd November 2020, in relation to the Proposed Update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (the 'Updated Guidelines' and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening.

The EPA is one of the statutory environmental authorities under the SEA Regulations. In our role as a SEA environmental authority, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Updated Guidelines and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the Updated Guidelines. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

Where we provide specific comments on plans and programmes, our comments will focus on the EPA's remit and areas of expertise (in particular water, air, climate change, waste, resource efficiency, noise, radon and the inter-relationships between these and other relevant topics e.g. biodiversity), as appropriate and relevant to the particular Updated Guidelines.

Proposed SEA Determination

We note your proposed determination regarding the need for SEA of the Updated Guidelines that SEA is not required.

Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) WebTool

This new tool was launched recently by the EPA. It is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. It is available at www.enviromap.ie. The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners examine environmental considerations, anticipate potential land-use conflicts, and help identify suitable development locations while also protecting the environment.

State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2020

In preparing the Updated Guidelines and associated SEA screening, the recommendations, key issues and challenges described in our State of the Environment Report [Ireland’s Environment – An Assessment 2020](#) (EPA, 2020) should be considered, as relevant and where appropriate. This should also be considered, in preparing the Updated Guidelines.

Available Guidance & Resources

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

- SEA process guidance and checklists
- Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA
- topic specific SEA guidance (including *Good practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment* (EPA, 2020), *Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring* (EPA, 2020), *Integrating climatic factors into SEA* (EPA, 2019), *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA* (EPA, 2015))

You can access these resources at: www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/sea/

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

Our SEA WebGIS Tool has been updated recently and is now publicly available at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/SEA>. It allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist public authorities in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

EPA WFD Application

Our WFD Application provides access to water quality and catchment data from the national WFD monitoring programme. The Application is accessed through EDEN <https://wfd.edenireland.ie/> and is available to public agencies. Publicly available data can be accessed via the www.catchments.ie website.

Future amendments to the Updated Guidelines

Where changes to the Updated Guidelines are made prior to finalisation, or where future modifications to the Guidelines are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 435 of 2004).

Appropriate Assessment

You should ensure that the Updated Guidelines complies with the requirements of the Habitats Directive where relevant. Where Appropriate Assessment is required, the key

findings and recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and the Updated Guidelines.

EPA AA GeoTool

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <http://www.epa.ie/terminalfour/ApproAssess/index.jsp>

Environmental Authorities

Under the SEA Regulations, prior to making your SEA determination you should also consult with:

- Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (formerly Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (functions transferred from Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government/ Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht by S.I. 192 of 2011);
- Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications (formerly Minister of Communications, Climate Change and the Environment); and
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

SEA Determination

As soon as practicable after making your determination as to whether SEA is required or not, you should make a copy of your decision, including, as appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection in your offices and on your website. You should also send a copy of your determination to the relevant environmental authorities consulted.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.

Yours sincerely,



Cian O'Mahony
SEA Section
Office of Evidence and Assessment