

CHAPTER 11- ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL

Context	128
Environmental Appraisal Approach	128
Appraisal Progress to Date	129
Review and Monitoring	131

CHAPTER 11: ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL

CONTEXT

- 11.1 Section 10(5)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that a development plan shall contain information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan.
- 11.2 The requirement is a further step in the progression of agenda 21 which is the action plan for sustainable development and is the means whereby the impact on the environment of public programmes and policies are assessed.
- 11.3 This requirement is in accordance with the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC).
- 11.4 The plan is framed in the context of the Planning and Development Act. In addition the plan takes account of the EPA "State of the Environment Report, April 2000".
- 11.5 Laois County Council has always taken account of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing policies and objectives of the Development Plan. The Policies in the Plan are drafted specifically with objective of the minimisation /prevention of negative significant effects on the Environment.
- 11.6 It must be remembered that development takes place in a continuum. This Development Plan will cover the period of six years from 2006-2012 and must be considered as part of the longer continuum.
- 11.7 In this context, many of the decisions that have significant environmental effects are made at Central Government level e.g The National Development Roads Programme. The County Development Plan facilitates the where and how of these decisions. Larger projects are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment. This Plan is based on a target population of 80,380 by 2020 in line with Regional Planning Guidelines.

ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL APPROACH

- 11.8 The whole area of Strategic Environmental assessment is very new. To date guidelines and methodologies on environmental appraisal approaches have not been fully developed. The approach used in developing the environmental assessment for this plan has largely been based on the requirements of the Directive and on the experience gained in terms of the Heritage Appraisal carried out for the 2000 Laois County Development Plan by CAAS and the Heritage Council document "Heritage Appraisal of Development Plans – A Methodology for Planning Authorities".
- 11.9 The appraisal approach is as follows:
1. Define the purpose and scope of the appraisal;
 2. Set the agreed strategic environmental aims for the environment;
 3. Set agreed goals and strategic aims for the development Plan;
 4. Scope the policies of the Development Plan to ensure that a comprehensive range of environmental issues are covered, and

5. Appraise the overall goals and strategic aims in the development plan in terms of their impact on the environment.

APPRAISAL PROGRESS TO DATE

- 11.10 The appraisal process has focused on the plans' overall goals and strategic aims, i.e. the process identified in Step 5. The strategic environmental aims which have been identified and which are used to assess the Development Plan are as follows:

ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS			
1	Energy Efficiency	To encourage and promote energy efficiency	E1
2	Environmental Protection	To protect the environment; to minimise pollution; To contain change within environmental capacities; and to adopt the precautionary principle	E2
3	Non Renewables	To protect use and consume non renewable resources wisely and efficiently	E3
4	Renewables	To manage the use of and consumption of renewable resources within the limits of replenishment.	E4
5	Biodiversity	To conserve and enhance biodiversity	E5
6	Environmental Quality	To restore conserve and enhance local environmental quality, diversity, character and distinctiveness	E6
7	Environmental Equity	To improve environmental equity, especially accessibility to and understanding of environmental, historical and cultural resources and heritage.	E7

Table 22: Policy Appraisal Matrix

√ - POSITIVE
X - NEGATIVE
O - NEUTRAL
? - UNCERTAIN

POLICY REF	TOPIC	E1 - ENERGY EFFICIENCY	E2 - ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	E3 - NON RENEWABLES	E4 - RENEWABLES	E5 - BIODIVERSITY	E6 - ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	E7 - ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY
1.08	To encourage and promote balanced and sustainable growth patterns in urban and rural areas so as to develop the potential of County Laois and fulfil its role as envisaged in the NSS, the Regional Planning Guidelines, and the County Development Board Strategy.	√	O	O	√	√	√	√
1.09	To promote and encourage social inclusion in all aspects of life so as to ensure equal access to all employment, educational, transport, social and cultural activities.	√	√	O	√	√	O	√
1.10	To maintain and improve the quality of life for all local people and visitors to the County by ensuring that the rural landscape and towns and villages retain their natural and built character.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
1.11	To provide for and protect the interests of the local population of the County	√	√	?	√	√	√	√
1.12	To promote , maintain and enhance the rural character and the existing settlement hierarchy within the County	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
STRATEGIC AIMS								
	To facilitate the future sustainable development of County Laois so as to optimise the benefits of its location in accordance with the National Spatial Strategy(NSS) and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines	√	O	√	√	√	√	√
	To facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the County's population with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs in a sustainable manner	√	O	O	√	√	√	√
	To promote balanced and sustainable economic development and employment throughout the County ensuring that a diverse range of economic sectors are developed and supported	O	?	√	√	√	√	√
	To facilitate the provision of social and recreational infrastructure and to provide access to new and existing community and social facilities throughout the County for all citizens	√	O	O	√	√	√	√
	To facilitate economic and social development of the County through the provision of adequate transport infrastructure and optimise the return on investment or infrastructure while preserving the built and natural heritage	√	O	?	√	√	√	√
	To ensure a good quality life for the citizens of Laois through maintaining and improving waste water facilities and water supplies and minimising the adverse impacts of development on the environment through policies for the management of wastes and emissions	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	To reinforce the distinctive character of County Laois through ensuring that sites and species of biodiversity importance are identified, conserved and managed appropriately	O	√	√	√	√	√	√
	To protect, conserve and enhance the built, natural and cultural environment through promoting awareness, utilising relevant legislation and promoting good quality urban and rural design	√	?	√	?	√	√	√
	To ensure orderly development of the County through the implementation of development control policies and standards for a range of types of development	√	√	?	√	√	√	√
	To promote the balanced and sustainable development of the urban and rural areas of the County for a range of residential, services and employment opportunities	√	√	O	√	√	√	√

√ - POSITIVE
X - NEGATIVE
O - NEUTRAL
? - UNCERTAIN

Review and Monitoring

11.11 The review and monitoring of the environmental impact of the development plan will continue during the course of the Plan period as more detailed guidance on the methodology of environmental appraisal becomes available.

11.12 This will include

- detailed appraisal of the development plan policies
- Identifying measurable indicators of environmental change and agreeing the scope of monitoring.

11.13 Likely measurable indicators are as follows:

- Number of houses for which planning permission as been granted
- Number of houses completed
- Acreage of urban land consumed for residential development
- Acreage of urban land consumed for commercial /industrial /enterprise development
- Movements in houses prices
- State of the Environment Reports (E.P.A)