



Laois County Development Plan review
Forward Planning team
Laois County Council
Aras An Chontae
JFL Avenue
Port Laoise
County Laois

2 March 2020

Re: Issues Paper – Laois CDP 2021-2027

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of notification of the above issues paper. The Department of Education and Skills has examined the contents therein and would like to make the following submission.

The Department notes with interest that the population is projected to grow from 84,967 (Census 2016) to 94,000 by 2026. If these projected population increases materialise, a requirement for additional education provision at both primary and post-primary level could emerge over the lifetime of the proposed new Plan.

In respect of the pre-draft stage of the new Laois County Development Plan, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) requests the following:

1. That the Laois County Development Plan would be explicit in its support for the provision of school accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones. That the Development Plan would include policy objectives on both the provision of new schools and the protection of existing schools.
2. It is noted that some Local Authorities' Development Plans contain a community and infrastructure land use zoning objective which includes schools as a use that is permitted in principle. This Department requests that Laois County Council consider the use of such a land use zoning objective where appropriate.
3. That the proposed development of sites which have been identified by this Department for school provision to meet immediate school place requirements is explicitly supported by means of an appropriate zoning and/or by a Specific Local Objective on the subject sites. Further details can be supplied as required.



4. That Laois County Council would actively facilitate the principle of permitting schools, both permanent and temporary in as many zoning categories as possible.
5. The implications of using only mixed-use zoning objectives in established areas on the availability of land for school development should be considered. The identification and implementation of measures to mitigate the risk of the DES having to compete with proposed higher-value development in respect of acquisitions of mixed-use zoned sites would support the achievement of Value for Money for the State. The appropriateness of community and infrastructure zoning objectives should be considered in that context, while still permitting school development under other zoning objectives.
6. While it is understood that the primary focus will be the school requirements during the lifetime of the Development Plan, the Department asks that Laois County Council be mindful of possible school requirements beyond that timeframe and protect sufficient land to provide for potential school sites in future Development Plans, in the context of Project 2040 and other long-term population projections as may be relevant.
7. That the potential requirement for new schools in existing or established residential areas, which may arise from incremental changes in demographic or residential profile as a result of economic development, regeneration or increase in housing density etc be given full consideration. The Project 2040 goals around densification and infill development will contribute significantly to challenges in providing school accommodation in such established residential areas.
8. Zoning for education development adjacent to established schools to facilitate potential future expansion will be critical in meeting school accommodation requirements arising from the incremental changes described above and may, in some instances, present the only viable solution.
9. Support for urban-design schools, as per the DES guidelines, in established areas would be welcomed. In particular, measures to facilitate reduced requirements for onsite parking and set-down and to support access to off-site facilities would be beneficial.
10. The DES' current Technical Guidance Documents on school site identification and suitability assessment (TGD 25 and TGD 27) can be used to inform the selection of proposed school sites and are available on www.education.ie. Revised guidelines for schools designed for urban sites will be published by the Department in 2020 and Laois County Council should monitor the Department's website as guidelines for school developments may be updated from time to time.
11. Laois County Council should consider potential synergies with adjacent facilities in the proposed siting of schools.



12. That the capacity of existing schools and any planned-for schools, as published by the Department be considered as “supporting infrastructure and facilities” and given high priority in Laois County Council’s assessment of the suitability of specific lands for residential development.

This Department will be pleased to engage collaboratively with Laois County Council in respect of the identification of potential school accommodation requirements to be addressed in the Plan. Information in respect of the proposed distribution of housing and population, once available, will inform the DES’ analysis of such requirements and the Department looks forward to further engagement in that regard.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Hanlon
Site Acquisitions and Property Management Section