

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's)

Environmental Impact Assessments are currently governed by The Town & County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999.

The Regulations place a requirement on the developer to supply certain levels of information with a planning application for development. Developments which are classified as Schedule 1 must be accompanied by an Environmental Statement which is the document that results from the assessment process.

A further lower level of developments are classed as Schedule 2. This means an Environmental Assessment can only be requested when there are anticipated significant environmental effects. Schedule 2 also contains some thresholds and criteria where this may occur. However, it is important to note that simply exceeding these thresholds does not mean an EIA is needed, merely that the prospect must be investigated.

Where a developer is unsure whether an EIA is required, they can request a screening opinion from the Local Planning Authority who have 3 weeks to respond. If the developer is not happy with this, they can appeal.

Once it has been decided that an EIA is needed, a scoping opinion can be sought to get guidance as to the content and level of assessment.



The LPA should consult on this and summarise their findings to the applicant. However, there is a variation in approach between Local Authorities and some do not provide as comprehensive service as they should. You can of course choose to contact various consultees direct.

An Environmental Statement will consist of a description of the site and its constraints, a description of the proposal and then an assessment of the effects. Normally, there will be a number of specialists involved with results contained with separate appendices.

Once an EIA is completed the results are contained in the Environmental Statement. A non technical summary should also be prepared summarising the proposed scheme and results of the various studies.

One of the difficulties with EIA's is 'matching' the level of input to the size of development. This can particularly be the case in small, agricultural proposals. However, with large infrastructure type projects, an EIA can take a considerable time to complete.



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