

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS PLANNING APPLICATIONS- ADVISORY NOTE

The following represents an advisory note on the requirements for agricultural developments in planning applications. It sets out local planning policy together with the requirements to accompany planning applications.

Development Plan Policy

It is the policy of Carlow County Council to:

(AG. P1): Support agricultural development and encourage the continuation of agriculture as a contributory means of maintaining population in the rural area.

(AG. P2): Support and facilitate changes to farming practices that will adapt to climate change and a more sustainable sector, that encourage biodiversity and contribute to more sustainable methods of production.

(AG. P3): Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.

(AG. P4): Ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive.

In relation to intensive agricultural installations (i.e. intensive pig and poultry farming), recent EPA Guidance (2021) on Assessment of the Impact of Ammonia and Nitrogen on Natura 2000 sites from intensive agriculture installations should be consulted when carrying out project assessment.

Key Standards for Agricultural Structures

Chapter 16 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 outlines the key standards for agricultural buildings and structures as follows.

The design, scale, siting, and layout of agricultural buildings should respect, and where possible enhance the rural environment. In the construction and layout of agricultural buildings, the Council will require;

- That buildings are sited appropriately in order to minimise obtrusion on the landscape. The Council will generally seek to cluster agricultural buildings and structures together to assimilate effectively into the landscape and will encourage the reuse of any redundant farm buildings where viable.
- Use of dark coloured cladding (dark browns, greys, greens and reds)
- Satisfactory treatment of effluents, including yard run-off within the confines of the site.
- Compliance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.
- Traffic safety considerations.

In the case of new farm enterprises, a clear evidence base must be provided which demonstrates the need for the proposal and details of how any buildings proposed form part of a comprehensive business plan for the farm holding supported by Teagasc.

General Advice Applicable to all Agricultural Developments

The applicant is advised to submit a site layout plan that highlights;

- the application site (outlined in red),
- the applicant's farm and farmyard,
- existing buildings and proposed buildings,

- details of yard gates and walls,
- other land owned by the applicant (outlined in blue),
- any existing streams/watercourses/wells or protected structures located on or adjoining the site.

Requirements for Agricultural Developments

Carlow County Council requires the following information to be submitted as part of all planning applications relating to agricultural structures which are intended to house animals, or such structures which may generate farm effluent, i.e., animal slurry, farmyard manure, silage effluent, soiled water, or dairy washings.

- Schedule of proposed and existing buildings including floor area.
- Schedule of proposed and existing livestock being housed.
- Where appropriate, a signed agreement with other landowners for the spreading of effluent on their lands.
- A fertilizer plan or nutrient management plan should be submitted in relation to stock numbers on the farm unit. This report must show how effluent calculations & slurry storage arrangements are adequate, in relation to any additional effluent which may be generated as a result of the proposed new structure.
Information on surplus slurry/ FYM, Soiled water storage capacities should be included.
- Information on how all farmyard manure & slurry produced on the farm will be dealt with should be submitted with reference to nutrient management planning for the landholding and current legislation. If soiled water is to be generated on the farm as a result of the proposed development, the applicant must clarify if there is sufficient storage capacity for 15 days storage.
Reference should be made to European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters) Regulations (S.I. No 113 of 2022) in the calculations.
- The applicant is also advised to submit a landscaping plan that demonstrates the existing hedgerows/trees to be retained and/or removed, and the proposed planting of new hedgerows/trees for screening purposes.

Requirements for Equine Developments

In addition to the requirements for agricultural developments, Carlow County Council advises applicants to submit the following information as part of planning applications for equine developments.

- The applicant must specify the number of horses to occupy the stables.
- The applicant must specify where the straw manure / bedding from the stables will be stored on site over the 16-week winter closure period before being land spread.
- The applicant must specify where the straw manure/ effluent from the stables will be brought for land spreading, details must be provided to show that there is adequate land available to receive the manure and any effluent, and they must show how the storage and spreading will be done in accordance with current legislation.
- Details must be provided showing how any effluent produced from the storage of any manure on site will be contained.
- The applicant must clarify if the horses will be washed down in the area of the stables, and if so, how any wash water will be collected and disposed of, in accordance with current legislation.
- The applicant is also advised to submit a landscaping plan that demonstrates the existing hedgerows/trees to be retained and/or removed, and the proposed planting of new hedgerows/trees for screening purposes.

Requirements for Intensive Agricultural Developments

In addition to the aforementioned, intensive agricultural developments (i.e., pig and poultry farming) shall be accompanied by the following:

- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or Appropriate Assessment depending on the size and use of the unit, and its likely impact on the environment.

- Details of the scale and intensity of the proposed development and existing operations in the vicinity of the site, including the cumulative impact of similar type developments within proximity of the site.
- Methods for waste management including frequency and location of disposal relative to the proposed unit.
- Details which will confirm compliance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017, as amended.
- Details of air pollution arising from the units and effluent storage, transportation and spreading.
- Proximity of development to aquifers and water courses and its impact on them.
- The potential impact of the proposal on the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers must be considered.
- Details of associated activities such as cleaning, ventilation, and heating.
- A comprehensive landscaping plan.
- A statement outlining why a location on the landholding was deemed more appropriate to alternative options. If the Planning Authority, consider a more appropriate location is available on the landholding the application may not receive favourable consideration.
- Traffic management plans and traffic assessment associated with the proposed development may be required for large proposals.

Common Issues That Give Rise to Further Information

Common issues at application stage which give rise to Further Information include insufficient information being submitted relating to:

- The number of proposed and existing livestock.
- The proposed and existing effluent storage and spreading methods.
- Effluent calculations.
- Surplus slurry/ FYM capacities.
- Soiled water storage capacities.
- The use of sewage sludge in agriculture.
- Landscaping plan.
- Straw manure/ bedding storage.
- Straw manure/ effluent spreading.
- Horse wash down area and wash water collection and disposal.

Notes:

Carlow County Council (2022) *Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028*.

Government of Ireland (2022) *S.I. No. 393/2022 - European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2022*.

Office of the Planning Regulator (2022) *Agricultural & Farm Development – The Planning Issues*.