

Your guide to...

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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Certain types of applications require extra information. Development likely to have a significant effect on the environment is subject to an **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** [See [The Town and Country Planning \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) Regulations 2017 for England](#) and [The Town and Country Planning \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2017](#)]. The aim of an EIA is to ensure that the environmental effects of a new development, and alternatives, are fully evaluated before a planning decision is made.

"Significant effect" is context-specific and evaluated against multiple factors. The EIA process determines whether a proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects, and, if so, whether an EIA is required. The types of applications that are most likely to have a significant effect on the environment include developments in protected areas, large-scale developments and developments that could lead to substantial pollution, biodiversity loss or resource depletion.

Certain types of development require automatic EIA because they're listed on Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. This includes **major developments**⁽¹⁾ such as ports, power stations and motorways and express roads. Other developments (listed on Schedule 2) may need an EIA if their environmental effects could be significant. Official Government guidance on EIAs can be found for [England here](#) and for [Wales here](#).

Impacts to watercourses should be taken into account in deciding whether EIA is required and also in the EIA itself if one is required.

If an EIA is required, the developer must produce an 'environmental statement' along with the planning application. This should explain how measures taken in the development do the least possible harm to the environment and what that harm will be. Environmental statements

should look at alternatives to the development proposal. The public has the right to comment on the environmental statement. **Local planning authorities**⁽²⁾ should decide on planning applications for development requiring an environmental impact assessment within 16 weeks.

Glossary

- 1. Major Developments** - A major development is a development that consists of mineral working; development of ten or more houses; a residential development with a site area of 0.5 hectares or more; development of floorspace of 1,000 square metres or more; and development of a site of one hectare or more.
- 2. Local Planning Authority** - The local government body responsible for formulating planning policies, controlling development and determining planning applications. This could be a **district council**⁽³⁾, **unitary authority**⁽⁴⁾, metropolitan council or national park authority. When development involves minerals or waste, the **county council**⁽⁵⁾ or **unitary authority**⁽⁴⁾ is normally the local planning authority, and is referred to also as the minerals planning authority or the waste planning authority.
- 3. District Council** - The lower tier, or where parish or town councils exist, middle tier, of the two or three-tier county shire local authority structure in England. District council responsibilities include planning, waste collection and provision of leisure facilities.
- 4. Unitary Authority** - Unitary authorities provide a one-tier, or where parish or town councils exist a two-tier, structure of local authority in England. The responsibilities of unitary authorities include registering births, marriages and deaths, waste collection and disposal, social services, and provision of social housing.
- 5. County Council** - The upper tier of the two- or three-tier county shire local authority structure in England. County council responsibilities include transport, schools and administering births and marriages.