Housing target not high enough say councillors

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Laois County Council has easily exceeded its target to supply more social housing, but councillors say that target was set too low.

The local authority was given a national Housing For All target back in 2022 to build a total of 534 new houses by 2026. That includes houses built by Approved Housing Bodies, like Clúid.

Less than halfway through 2025, and they have shot past that target, Laois County Council CEO Michael Rainey confirmed at the May council meeting.

"To date we have delivered 669 homes. So already far in excess of our target set by Government.

"We have another 387 social houses under construction in 2025. That is a significant number for any county to show. So again this county is exceeding the Government targets.

"Looking at Affordable Housing, we have a target of 38 units by the end of 2026 and we have already completed sales of 34 units with a further 25 coming through. There is a positive and ambitious attitude of this council across all the housing numbers. At the end of the day, this comes down to putting a roof over people's heads. 21 secured houses in April, that's a great number. I congratulate everybody involved," Mr Rainey said.

He wasn't allowed too much congratulations however.

"It's great to be over it, but the target should be higher," said Cllr James Kelly.

"I agree, we are well above our targets but they're far too low," said Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley. She asks when the council will build any four bedroom social homes, and also asks if any new programmes are coming offering Affordable Homes.

"For those people earning above €35,000 we don't seem to have anything. For people whose relationships end or a young couple above the income limits, they can't get a home," she said.

Cllr Aisling Moran also wants a higher target to aim for.

"We are one of the best in the country, but like James said, the targets are not high enough, but we are doing brilliant," she said.

There are indeed higher targets on the way, confirmed Director of Services Angela McEvoy.

"A revision has been approved by the Government and we are just awaiting confirmation on that. Our activity over the past few years has been to progress that, and we await the targets to be set. Either way we're looking to prepare for growth. We just have to ensure that we align with the figures.

"Obviously it has to be in appropriate locations where services exist," Ms McEvoy added.

The Government is amending the National Planning Framework to increase its housing target to 50,500 per year to meet the population growth shown in the 2022 Census.

Seven Kilminchy areas going under council wing

Another big chunk of a huge Laois celtic tiger housing estate is being taken in charge by Laois County Council, but some parts still remain the responsibility of developers.

The Laois local authority plans to shortly take in charge seven more sections of Kilminchy housing estate in Portlaoise.

They intend to take on responsibility for roads, services, paths and streetlights, serving properties in Lake Drive Mews, Lake Drive, Lake Glade, Lake Crescent, Lake Grove, Lake Vale and Lake Gardens.

Director of Services Simon Walton confirmed the progress at the May meeting of Portlaoise Municipal District.

"There are a number of other areas but there is development ongoing adjacent to them, so it would be premature to take those areas in charge," Mr Walton explained.

The council is taking submissions regarding their declaration, up until Thursday, June 18. A report on any submissions made will then be given at the next full council meeting on June 30.

Kilminchy estate on the Dublin Road was built in the Celtic Tiger era, by multiple different private developers. With more houses now being built, it will have close to 800 houses and apartments, as well as a nursing home, retail and restaurant area, amenity lakes and a public Portlaoise town bus stop. A playground was planned but never built.

Other areas in the massive estate are already taken in charge. They include Lake Edge and Lakeside Gardens, Lake Avenue, 24 homes in Lake Drive, 11 homes in Lake Way, Lime Tree Avenue, 14 homes in Kilminchy Avenue, 11 in Kilminchy Close and 11 in Kilminchy Place.

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PLANNING APPLICATION TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA FOR APPROVAL
NOTICE PURSUANT TO:
SECTION 175 AND 177AE OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000, AS AMENDED, AND THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001-2025, AS AMENDED.

Laois County Council give notice of their intention to make an application seeking the approval of An Bord Pleanála under Section 175 and 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for the following proposed development:

Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme

The proposed development will consist of flood relief works along, adjacent to, and in the vicinity of the Clodiagh River, in the townlands of Brittas, Bunastick, Clonaslee, Ballynakill and Brockagh, in County Laois, within Laois County Council's administrative boundary.

The proposed flood relief works will consist of the construction and/or installation of:

(i) A flood defence embankment (c. 145 m long and a maximum height of 0.9 m above existing ground level) with a paved-surfaced crest replacing a section of the existing amenity pathway in Brittas Wood;

(ii) A concrete culvert headwall for the existing culvert within Brittas Wood;

(iii) A debris trap consisting of 6 no. concrete cast poles (each c. 3 m in height) over a concrete base in the channel of the Clodiagh River along Brittas Wood, and an associated access slipway with fencing and access gate;

(iv) A reinforced concrete flood defence wall with a stone finish (c. 235 m long and a maximum height of 1.2 m) with associated public footpath (c. 140 m long and 1.8 m wide) adjacent to the western elevation of an existing wall along Chapel Street;

(v) A flood defence embankment (c. 130 m long and a maximum height of 0.9 m) with a grass-seeded surface on the western bank of the Clodiagh River, northeast of Chapel Street;

(vi) A reinforced concrete flood defence wall (c. 70 m long and a maximum height of 0.6 m) on the eastern bank of the River Clodiagh within the grounds of Clonaslee's Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW); and

(vii) All associated and ancillary development works to facilitate the proposed flood relief works, including clearance and vegetation removal; installation of 2 no. temporary construction compounds with associated facilities; temporary construction signage and fencing; replacement of public lighting; fencing and gates; planting, reseeding, and biodiversity enhancement measures.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared in respect of the proposed development.
A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect of the proposed development.

An Bord Pleanála may give approval to the application for development with or without conditions or may refuse the application for development.

The application documentation, including the EIAR and the NIS, is available for inspection free of charge or purchased on payment of a specified fee (which fee shall not exceed the reasonable cost of making such copy) for a minimum period of **6 weeks from 18th June 2025 to 30th July 2025** (inclusive of both dates), at the following locations:

- **The Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Portlaoise, County Laois, R32 EHP9 during public opening hours, Mondays to Fridays (bank holidays excluded).**
- **Clonaslee Heritage Centre, Clonaslee, County Laois, R32 EH3F during public opening hours, Mondays to Fridays (bank holidays excluded).**
- **The offices of An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01 V0902, during public opening hours, Mondays to Fridays (bank holidays excluded).**
- **Laois County Council Consultation Portal, at the following website https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/clonaslee-flood-relief-scheme**

Submissions or observations may be made, in writing, to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01 V0902, or online at https://www.pleanala.ie/en-IE/Observation-on-a-strategic-infrastructure-devel in respect of:

(i) The implications of the proposed development dealing with the proper planning and development of the area in which the development is concerned;

(ii) The likely effects on the environment of the proposed development; and

(iii) The likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site, if carried out.

Any submission / observation must be accompanied by a fee of €50 (except for certain prescribed bodies) and must be received by An Bord Pleanála before 17:30 hours on 30th July 2025, and must include the following information:

(i) the name of the person making the submission or observation, the name of the person acting on his or her behalf, if any, and the address to which any correspondence relating to the application should be sent;

(ii) the subject matter of the submission or observation; and

(iii) the reasons, considerations and arguments on which the submission or observation is based in full.

Any submissions or observations which do not comply with the above requirements cannot be considered by the Board. A submission or observation duly made will be considered by the Board in making a decision on the application.

The Board may, at its absolute discretion, hold an oral hearing on the application.

The Board may, in respect of an application for permission, decide to:

a. (i) grant the permission, or

(ii) make such modifications to the proposed development as it specifies in its decision and grant permission in respect of the proposed development as so modified, or

(iii) grant permission in respect of part of the proposed development (with or without specified modifications of it of the foregoing kind), and any of the above decisions may be subject to or without conditions, or

b. refuse to grant the permission.

A person may question the validity of any such decision by the Board by way of an application for judicial review under order 84 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986), in accordance with section 50 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Practical information on the review mechanism can be accessed under the heading Publications – Judicial Review Notice on the Board's website www.pleanala.ie or the Citizens Information website www.citizensinformation.ie

Any enquiries relating to the application process should be directed to the Strategic Infrastructure Section of An Bord Pleanála (Telephone No. 01 8588100).

Signed: County Secretary,
Laois County Council.

Date: 10th June 2025.

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