

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

PLANNING REPORT

PLANNING REF: 26/60274



Applicant Name:	Laois Sawmills Limited
Development Description:	Construct an advertising sign
Development Address:	Ballymacken, Co Laois
Type of Permission:	Permission
Date of Site Inspection:	09/06/2026
Decision Due Date:	08/07/2026
Recommendation:	Refuse

Site Location

The subject site is located in the rural townland of Ballymacken, approximately 2.8km south-east of Portlaoise town centre. The subject site has a stated area of 11.9ha and accommodates an existing sawmill, a retail outlet and a number of associated structures. The site adjoins the M7 motorway and is accessed off the L-6769-1 Local Secondary Road by way of an existing entrance. The site fronts the N80 outside the town speed limit.

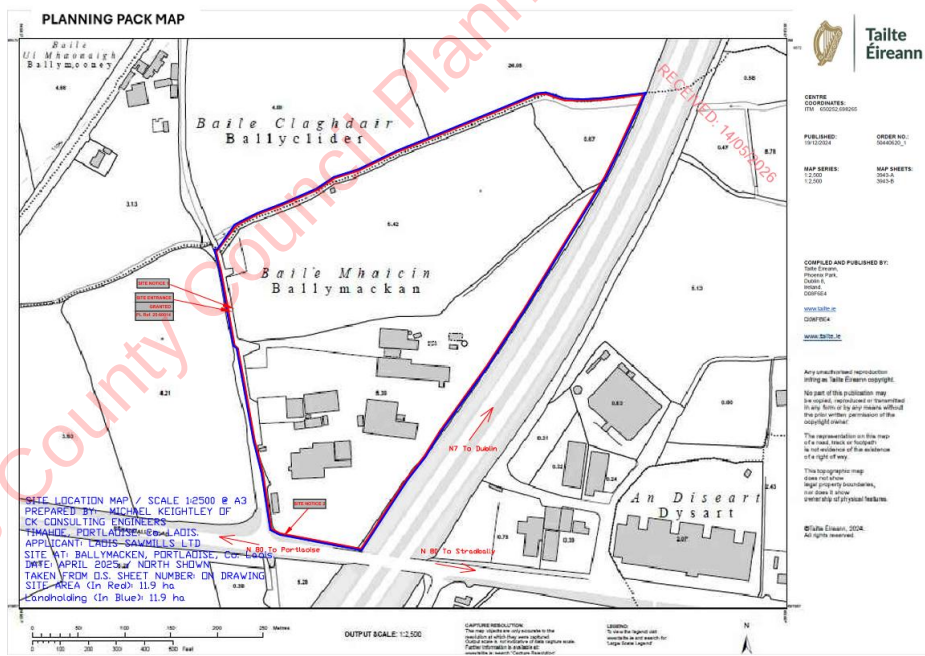


Figure 1: Site Location

Planning permission is sought to construct an advertising sign.



A screening for Appropriate Assessment Report was prepared and is appended to this report. It concludes that no likely significant impacts are predicted due to the nature of the proposed development.

The proposed development is not specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001(as amended). In any event, it is considered, having regard to nature, size and location, the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. Therefore, EIA is not required.

● The site is outside the confines of the Flood Zone.

The site does not fall within any archaeological areas and there are no protected structures or Monuments on or adjacent to the site.

Submissions/ Observations / Representations

None received by the Planning Authority.

Pre-planning

Pre-planning discussions have not taken place with respect to this proposal.

Planning History

25/60638: Construct a new maintenance and workshop shed. Conditional

25/60250: Construct a new material storage shed. Conditional

25/60014: Construct, operate and decommission a photovoltaic solar farm over an area of 2 hectares comprising of photovoltaic panels on ground mounted frames, a switch room building, Perimeter fencing, hardcore access tracks with underground ducting routes, landscaping, new site entrance and access road to solar farm and existing sawmill facility, surface water drainage with underground attenuation tank, revision of existing site boundaries along with all associated ancillary development works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been submitted with this application. Conditional

23/144: Permission granted to Laois Sawmills Ltd construct two new material storage sheds and demolish two existing material storage sheds.

22/149: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to construct a new material storage shed

22/129: Planning permission **refused** to Laois Sawmills Limited to extend duration on planning permission ref: 17/104

17/104: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to erect a 500kw Wind Turbine 49 metre high with a blade diameter of 52 metre, a new access roadway connecting to existing private roadway/hardstanding with underground ducting connecting to existing ESB Substation, and all associated site works.

15/367: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to 1. decommission and demolish existing timber processing plant and portal frame building; 2. construct new timber processing plant and portal frame building within the facility, including all associated infrastructure works and services.

13/100: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited construct a 478m² extension to the west elevation of the existing Bulk Pellet Storage Unit previously granted under planning reg. ref. 07/722.

09/282: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited for the erection of a new shed for the treatment and storage of timber and all associated siteworks.

07/722: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to construct a wood pellet manufacturing facility; including a pellet and packaging plant, artic loading bins, bulk pellet

storage unit, saw dust dry store unit, conveyor belts, silos and loading yard. The unit also to include attenuation areas, weigh bridge, new site entrance, internal road network and all associated site works.

04/1169: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to erect a new retail outlet, storage & car parking area.

02/332: Planning permission **granted** to Laois Sawmills Limited to erect a two storey office building.

Referrals:

Road Design: Refusal recommended

Municipal District Engineer: No report received

TII: No report received

Policy

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

Planning Considerations

Siting and Design

The proposed development consists of a Totem Sign on the Laois Sawmills site fronting the N80.

The proposed sign measures 6.25m high. It has a triangular plan form with each façade being 2m wide. It is to contain the Laois Sawmills logo and associated signage and will be top-lit. The sign is to have a galvanized steel frame. The sign is to be located within the verge adjacent to the N80 National Secondary Route.

Development Management Standard DM TC 10 (Advertisements on Public Roads) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out a number of objectives with respect to signs on private land along public roads as follows:

In dealing with applications the Planning Authority will have regard to the following: 1) Compliance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland's policy statement on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads (March 2011) and any updated versions of these documents, when the development concerns a national roadway. 2) Signs should be of a different colour scheme to that of tourist signage; 3) Within urban speed limits signs will not be permitted for businesses; 4) Signs for rural businesses shall not compete with road signs or otherwise endanger traffic safety. They will only be considered at an appropriate junction on a regional road and one sign at each junction leading to the business; 5) Signs will not be permitted where there is a proliferation of signage within a small area that leads to visual clutter and which may constitute a traffic hazard; 6) For reasons of road safety, signs for commercial enterprises

must not distract from road signs, changes to road layout or traffic lights/crossings; 7) Signs for tourism attractions and facilities will only be considered white on brown signs.

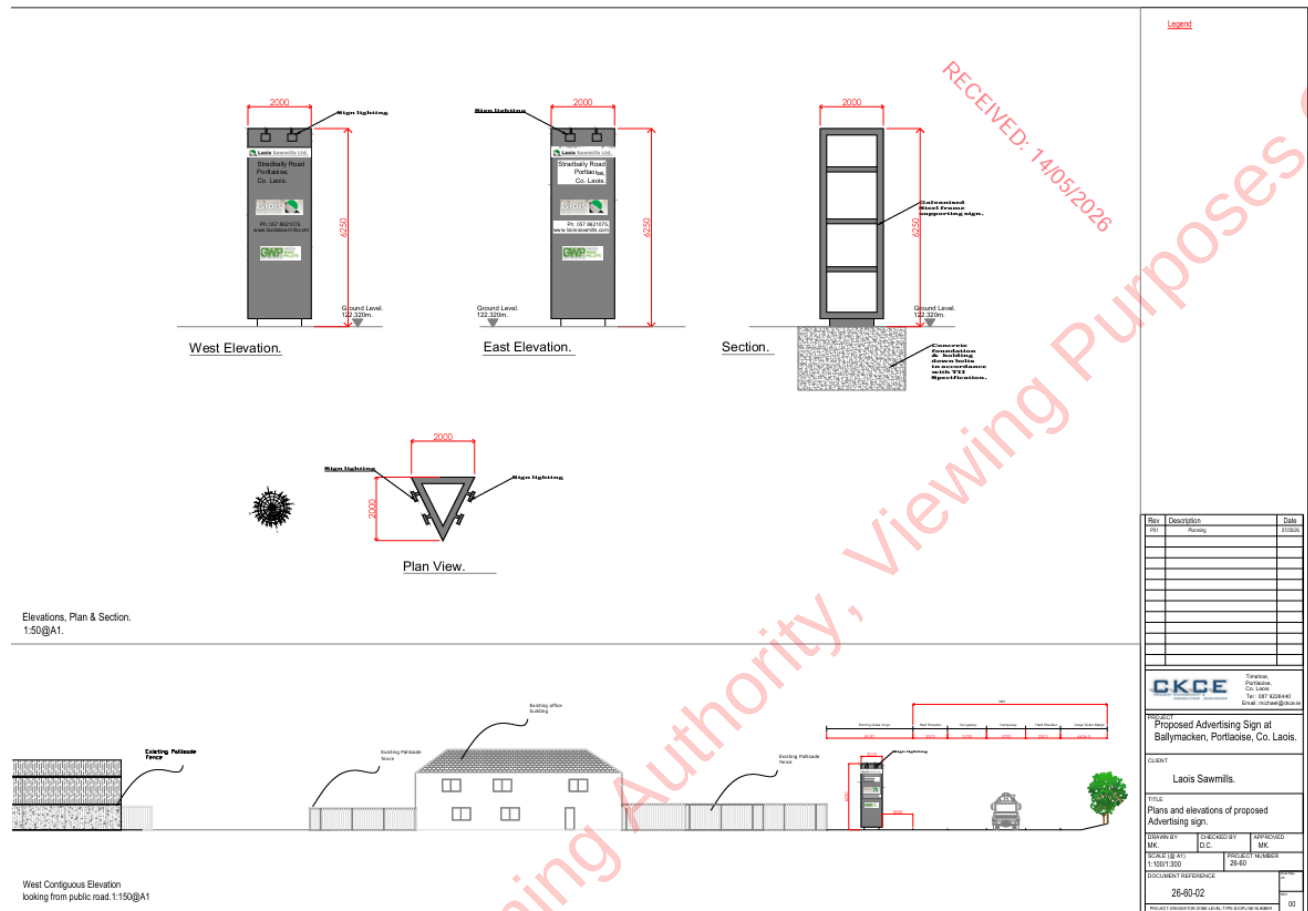


Figure 3: Proposal

There is no doubt that the sign given its height and location would represent a visually prominent feature in the rural landscape. The site of the proposed development is a prominent grassed verge location along a National Route where there is already a proliferation of signage on the existing Laois Sawmills fencing adjacent. Therefore, I am of the view that the proposal will give rise to visual clutter contrary to Development Management Standard DM TC 10 above.

Roads Issues

The site of the proposed development site fronts the N80 National Route. The sign is to be located within the verge adjacent to the N80.

Having assessed the proposal, I am satisfied that the proposal fails to accord with DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012). In my view, to permit the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard and the obstruction of road users, would set an undesirable precedent for further similar free standing advertising structures in this area which could lead to a proliferation of such developments which would adversely affect the operational efficiency

and safety of the road network particularly along the N80 with resultant serious injury to the traffic safety in the area, contrary to the provisions of DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and Development Management Standard DM TC 10 (Advertisements on Public Roads) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The application has also been referred to the Road Design Office who has recommended refusal in this respect.

Contributions

It is recommended that a development contribution of €1,000 be applied in the event of a grant of permission in accordance with the Councils adopted Development Contribution Scheme 2025-2031.

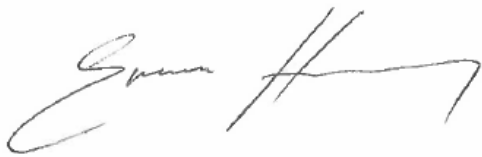
Conclusion

In accordance with the above assessment, the development is considered to be unacceptable in design, visual amenity and roads terms.

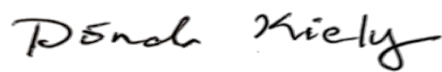
Recommendation

It is recommended that permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. Having regard to the location of the structure, which is highly visible from the N80 National **Secondary** Route, to permit the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard and obstruction of road users, would set an undesirable precedent for further similar free standing advertising structures in this area which could lead to a proliferation of such developments which **in turn** would adversely affect the operational efficiency and safety of the road network particularly along the N80 ~~with resultant serious injury to traffic safety in the area~~, contrary to the provisions of DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and Development Management Standard DM TC 10 (Advertisements on Public Roads) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. Development Management Standard DM TC 10 (Advertisements on Public Roads) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 outlines the considerations against which advertising structures will be assessed including inter alia, their impact on the visual amenity of the area. The signage, if permitted, would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area, would fail to accord with the general provisions of Development Management Standard DM TC 10 (Advertisements on Public Roads) of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.



Emma Hennessy
Executive Planner
19th June 2026



Senior Executive Planner, 19/06/2026

Donal Kiely
Senior Executive Planner

DB 22/06/2026

Laois County Council Planning Authority, Viewing Purposes Only!

ANNEX 1

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Laois County Council Planning Authority, Viewing Purposes Only!

**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT
AND
DETERMINATION**

(A) Project Details

Planning File Ref	26/60274
Applicant name	Laois Sawmills Ltd
Development Location	Ballymacken, Co. Laois
Site size	11.9 Hectares
Application accompanied by an EIS (Yes/NO)	No
Distance from Natura 2000 site in km	River Barrow and River Nore SAC – 7km south-east of the subject site.
Description of the project/proposed development Advertising Sign	

(B) Identification of Natura 2000 sites which may be impacted by the proposed development

			Yes/No If answer is yes, identify list name of Natura 2000 site likely to be impacted.
1	Impacts on sites designated for freshwater habitats or species. <u>Sites to consider:</u> River Barrow and Nore	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include freshwater habitats and/or species, or in the catchment (upstream or downstream) of same?</i>	Yes
2	Impacts on sites designated for wetland habitats - bogs, fens, marshes and heath.	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose</i>	No

	<u>Sites to consider:</u> River Barrow and Nore	<i>qualifying interests include wetland habitats (bog, marsh, fen or heath)</i>	
3	Impacts on designated terrestrial habitats. <u>Sites to consider:</u> River Barrow and Nore	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include woodlands, dunes or grasslands, or within 100m of same?</i>	No
4	Impacts on birds in SPAs <u>Sites to consider:</u> River Nore SPA	<i>Is the development within a Special Protection Area?</i>	No

Conclusion:

If the answer to all of the above is **No**, significant impacts can be ruled out for habitats and bird species.

No further assessment in relation to habitats or birds is required.

If the answer is **Yes** refer to the relevant sections of **C**.

(G) SCREENING CONCLUSION STATEMENT		
<i>Selected relevant category for project assessed by ticking box.</i>		
1	AA is not required because the project is directly connected with/necessary to the conservation management of the site	
2	No potential significant affects/AA is not required	
3	Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain. Seek a Natura Impact Statement Reject proposal. (Reject if potentially damaging/inappropriate)	X
Justify why it falls into relevant category above (based on information in above tables)		
Potential hydrological connectivity of the development site to the River Barrow & River Nore SAC (c.7km to the south-east)		
Name:	Emma Hennessy	
Position:	Executive Planner	
Date:	19/06/2026	