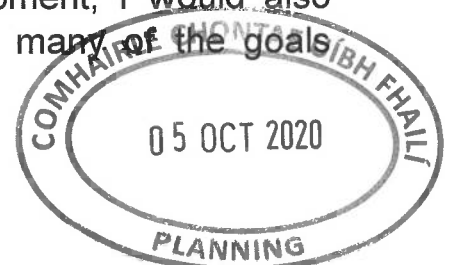


Hi, below are my suggestions and recommendations in relation to the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. In relation to Chapter 3: Climate Action and Energy, please include eco-villages in the list of strategies to mitigate climate change. An eco-village is an intentional community that aims to live in a way that is more environmentally, socially, culturally and economically sustainable. For eco-villages to become a possibility in Offaly, allowances would need to be made for small clusters of low impact houses to be built on agricultural land. This could be done modelling the successful One Planet Development Scheme in Wales. Under this scheme, people can build homes on agricultural land provided their carbon footprint and overall environmental impact stays below government set thresholds and they can demonstrate that they are living from land based enterprises. Ecovillages would help mitigate climate change in the following ways that line up with goals outlined in the draft county development plan:

- More people living and working on the land would make it more feasible to grow a diversity of crops with less fossil fuel use, helping us to move away from over reliance on cattle and sheep farming.
- Land management strategies that reduce risks of flooding and drought, as demonstrated by Cloughjordan in Tipperary and Tamera in Portugal.
- Eco-villages are 'compact and sustainable settlement patterns' – people living, working and producing their own food within a small locality greatly reduces carbon emissions from commuting and importing food. This also addresses the need to 'improve job: resident workers' ratio' and 'move towards self-sustaining rather than commuter driven activity'
- 'Promotion of the green enterprise sector and the creation of green collar jobs'
- Using solar, wind and bio-gas power sources as well as low carbon district heating.
- Buildings with green roofs
- Reforestation – both through planting woodlands and implementing agroforestry. Agroforestry integrates trees into agriculture and results in higher overall yields per acre than conventional agriculture.

<https://ecovillage.org/resources/climate-solutions/#:~:text=In%20the%20video%20Bates%20suggests,Carbon%20farming>

In relation to Chapter 2: Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy, Housing Strategy, please include eco-villages as a way of addressing many of the issues outlined, in particular rural depopulation and commuting. Many eco-villages (e.g. Cloughjordan in Tipperary, Findhorn in Scotland) have demonstrated proficiency in creating land based and other enterprises, thus reducing the need for people to move to or commute to large towns and cities for employment. I would suggest that Figure 2.1 Rural Area Types needs to be more detailed. Many areas included in the 'rural areas under urban influence' are actually 'structurally weaker rural areas'. In relation to Chapter 9: Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development, I would also recommend including eco-villages as a way to meet many of the goals



mentioned. In particular, allowing eco-villages to build community centres and education centres on a very small portion of agricultural land would enable programmes that could increase social inclusion and employment and bring a vibrant infusion of culture and community activity. Warm regards,
Siobhán Lavelle

