



Figure 6.1 The EIA process.

project impacts. For instance, an urban regeneration project can have potentially negative effects (increasing air pollution), and beneficial socio-economic effects (increasing levels of local employment) or vice versa. The inclusion of both components implies that techniques that deal with the assessment of both types of impact are needed.

A tool to determine potentially negative environmental effects is Environmental Impact Assessment. The term environmental impact assessment implies a package of methods aimed at both identifying any impact of policies, programmes, plans and projects, and assessing their effects on the environment and

human health.¹⁰ Environmental impact assessment is defined as a process through which significant environmental impacts are assessed and taken into account in the planning, design, authorization and implementation of all relevant types of action. As can be seen from Figure 6.1, this process supports decision making through the screening, scoping, identification, prediction and evaluation of key impacts of projects, and through the preparation and review of environmental impacts statements.

A similar process can be applied to policies, plans and programmes, which is called 'strategic environmental assessment'. The aim of this assessment is to ensure that consideration of environmental impacts is taken into account at the decision-making level, that is when policies and plans are formulated. This assessment will ensure that alternative approaches can be taken into consideration before a definitive decision is made about a particular project.

Environmental impact assessment is normally applied to certain kinds of development categories in relation to three features, viz. type of development, scale of development and the site of the development. The European Community Directive 337/85 on environmental impact assessment specifies in its Annex I the types of project for which the elaboration of an environmental impact assessment is mandatory. These projects include oil refineries, power stations but also construction of motorways, express roads and trading ports which are more often part of an urban design project. Annex II lists the projects which are submitted to environmental impact assessment only if the regional authorities require it. This second Annex includes infrastructure projects which have more relevance for the types of project considered in this book, such as urban-development projects, and tramways for passenger transport. This second Annex has created controversy because of the possibility that potentially harmful projects are overlooked if the decision of EIA is left to local authorities.¹¹ In the UK, the European Community