



**Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála**  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator

# Planning and the Local Elected Member

Niall Cussen

Planning Regulator



# Introduction

- Overview of Ireland's Planning Process – with a focus on policy/plan-making...
- Mention re functions of Members and Officials... (will be covered later also)
- Context for Local Authority policy functions...
- Role of the Office of the Planning Regulator...
- Planning Bill 2024 – what's coming down the track...
- Takeaways....

# Planning: Nature & Purpose

- Sustainable Development and Regeneration
- Economic Development
- Housing Development
- Sustainable Places and Communities
- Environment and Climate Change
- Conservation of Natural and Built Heritage



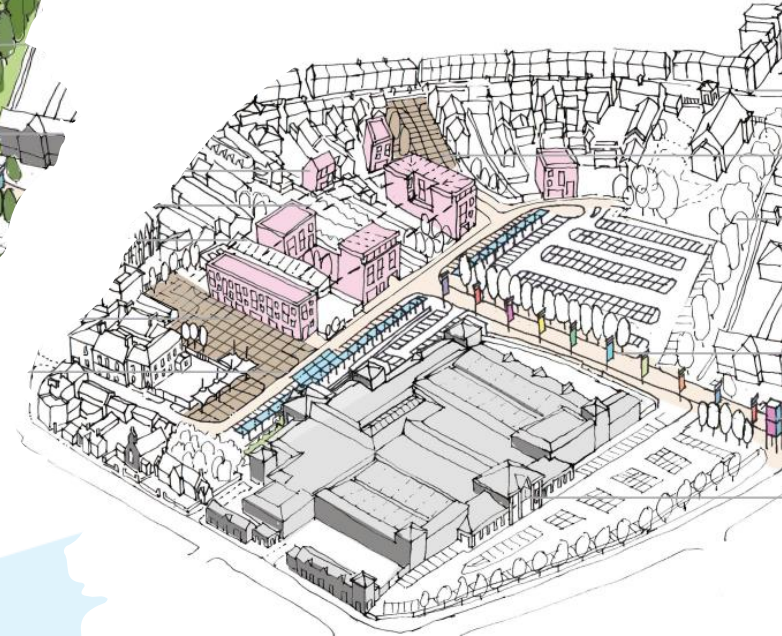
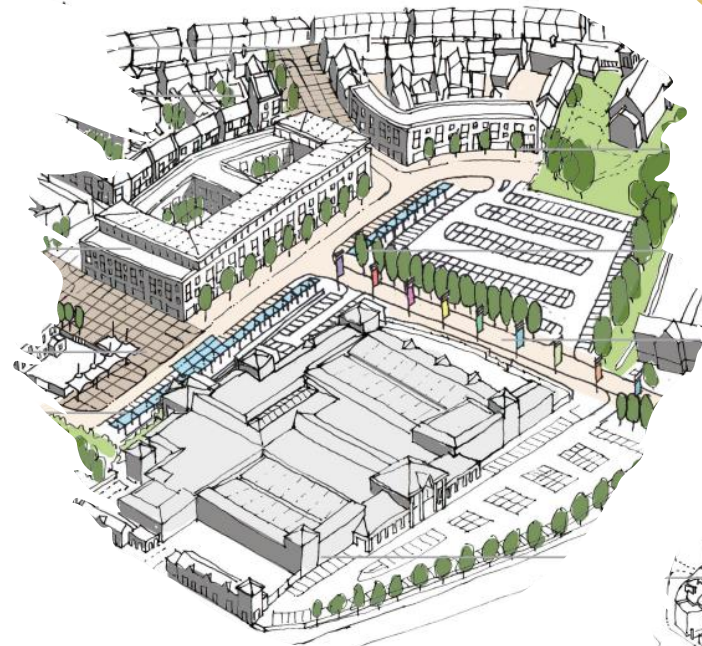
# Example: Place-making:

Targeting “Backlands/regeneration opportunities”

Assisting with land assembly

Enhancing “permeability” / connectivity

Creating vision – confidence - support

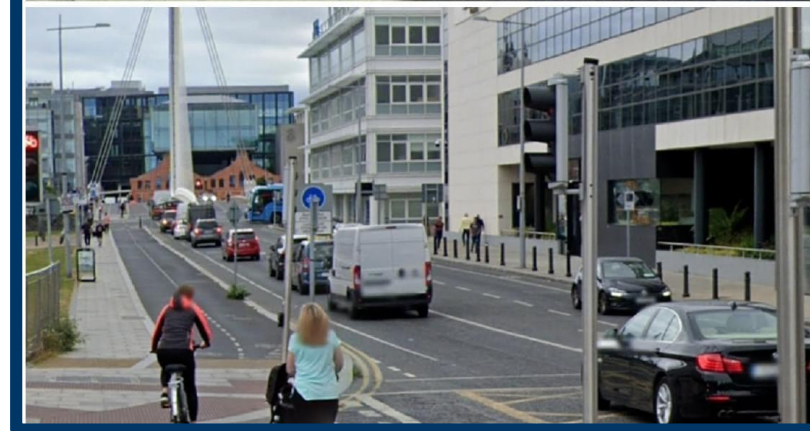


# Place-making:



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Before....



After...

# Planning is Delivering:



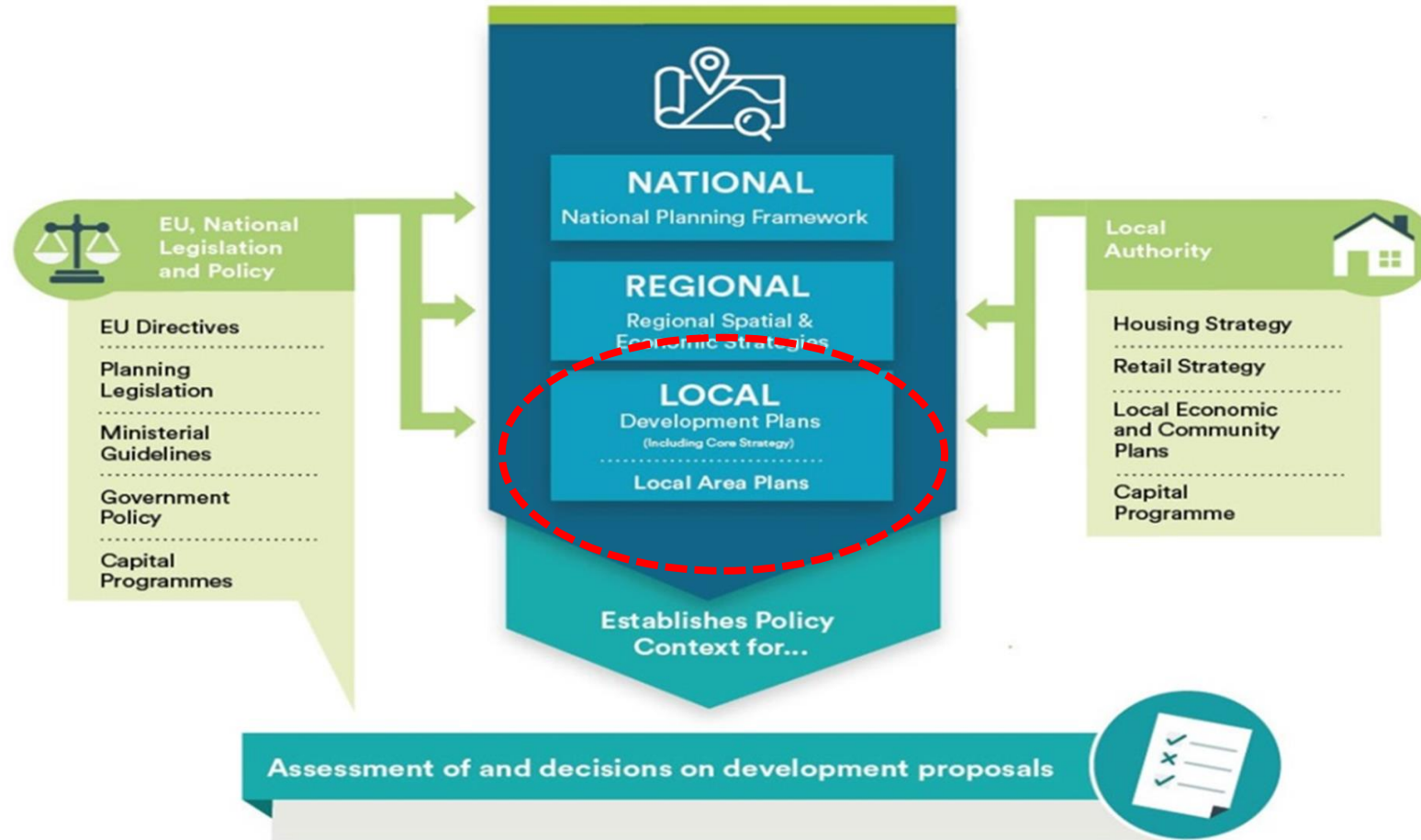
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# Irish Planning System An Overview



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# Supports/Inputs to LA Planning



**OPW** Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works



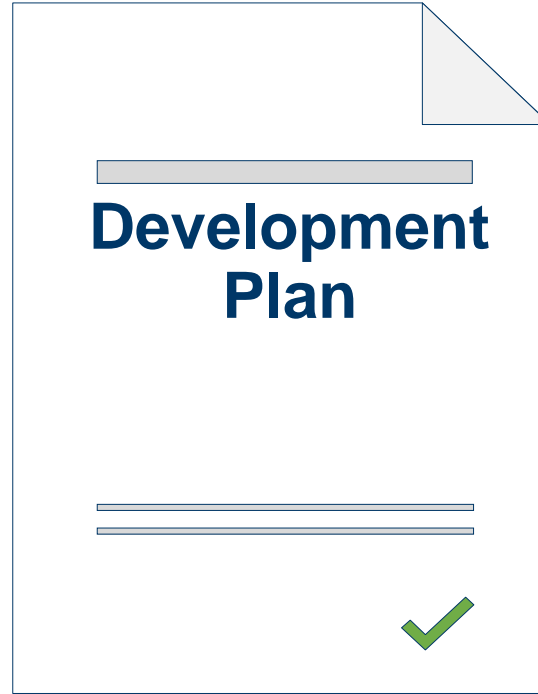
**NTA**  
Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair  
National Transport Authority



**Northern & Western  
Regional Assembly**



**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills



**An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta**  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



**Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt**  
Southern Regional Assembly



**An Roinn Comhshaoil,  
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide**  
Department of the Environment,  
Climate and Communications



**Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre**  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly



**Bonneagar Iompair Éireann**  
Transport Infrastructure Ireland

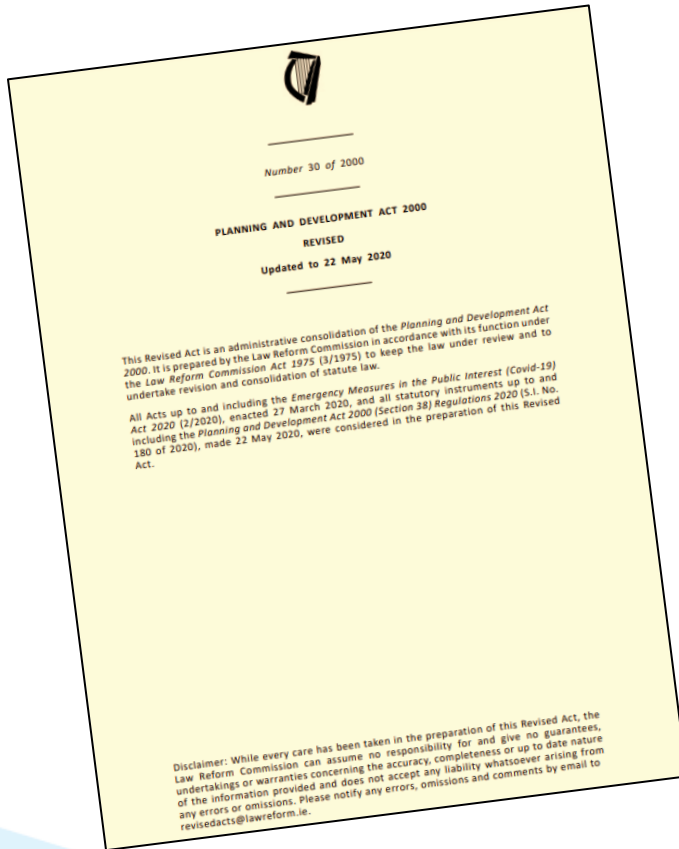


# Role of the OPR

- Assessment of Plans
- Planning Reviews
- Research, Training & Public Awareness



# Planning Act

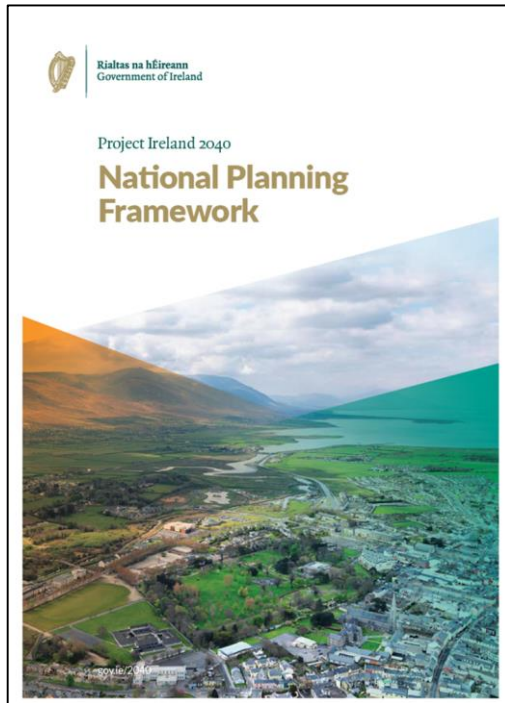


- Defines your functions in planning
- Obliges members and officials to act in long-term common good
- 277 Sections – complex area of law – we are obliged to providing training for you and officials on all/specific aspects
- Your authority’s officials will carefully guide and advise you on specific aspects/questions

# Noteworthy Sections of the Act

- **Section 10:** A development plan shall set out an overall strategy for proper planning and sustainable development
- **Section 12(11)** In making the development plan the members **shall be restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development** of the area...statutory obligations...relevant policies of the Government or any Minister
- **Section 12(18)** Statutory obligations includes that the development plan is consistent with the national and regional development objectives in the NPF and RSES
- **Section 27(1)** a planning authority **shall ensure** in making its development plan (or LAP) that it is **consistent** with the RSES

# National Planning Framework (NPF)

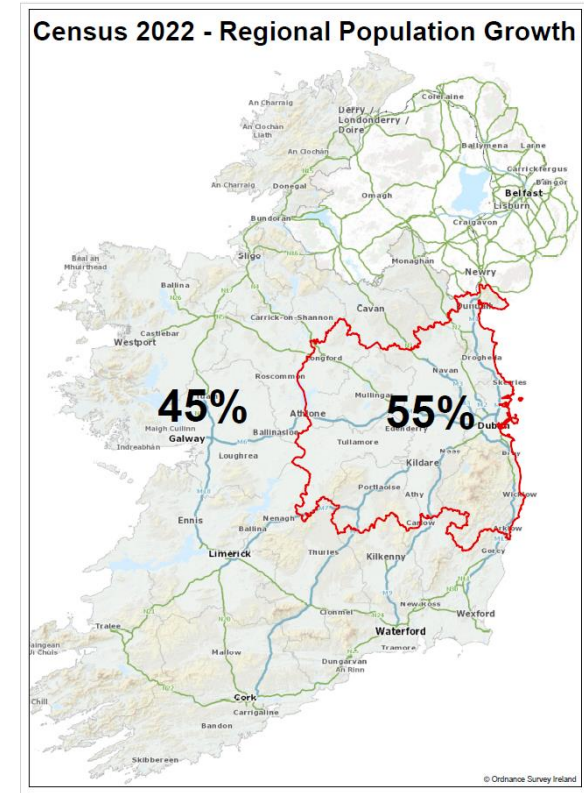
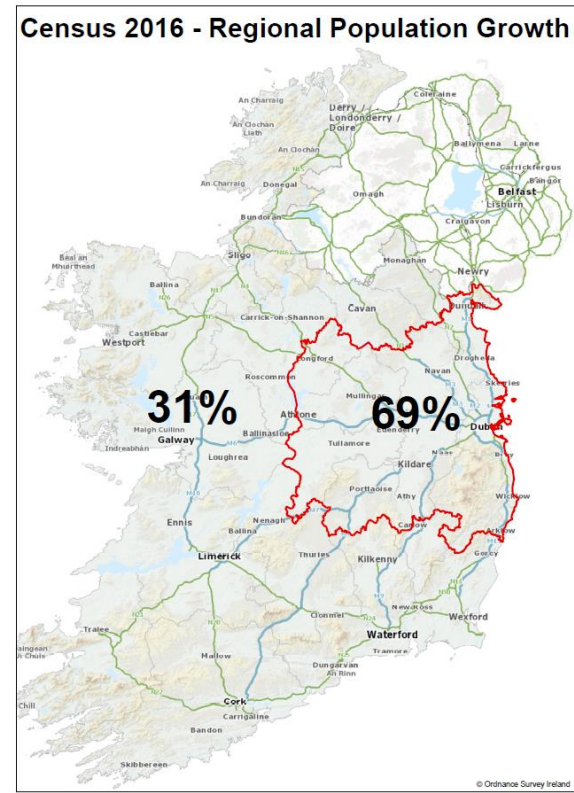


- Government's high-level spatial policy to 2040
- Backed by capital investment
- Alignment between local plan-making and NPF and NDP secures funding
- Subject to updating at present
  - Incorporating Census 2022
  - Revised population/housing forecasts
  - Updated policy context



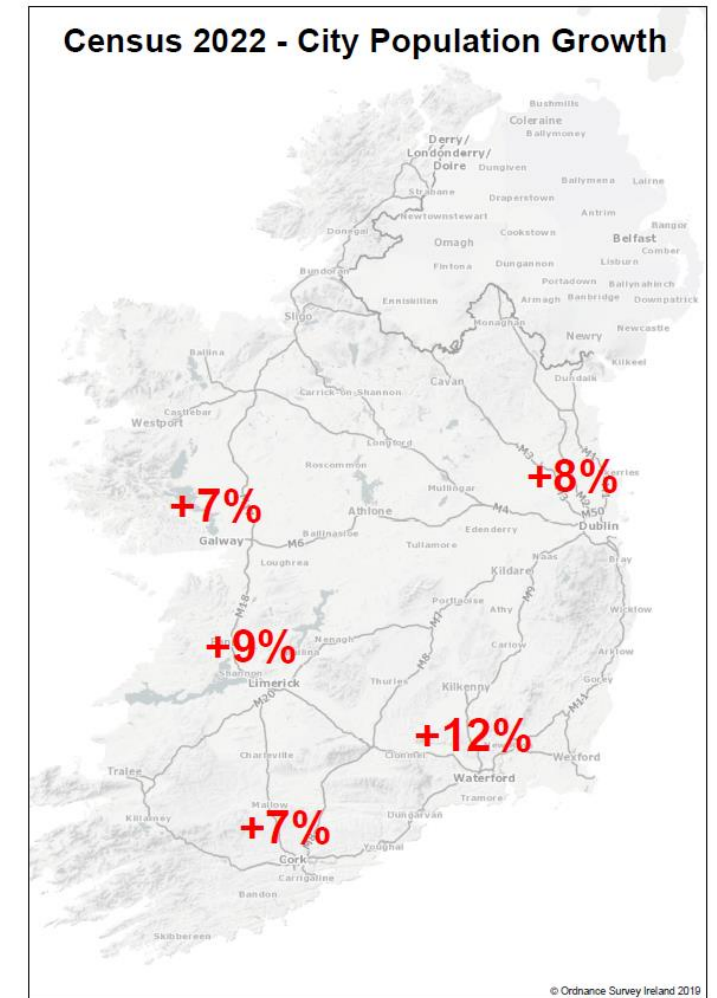
# NPF Review: Regional Balance

- Some encouraging signs...
  - Converging rates of population growth between Eastern and Midlands and N&W and Southern Regional Assembly areas
- Some further challenges
  - Location of housing delivery not matching location of demand
  - Stronger in-migration = increased housing targets

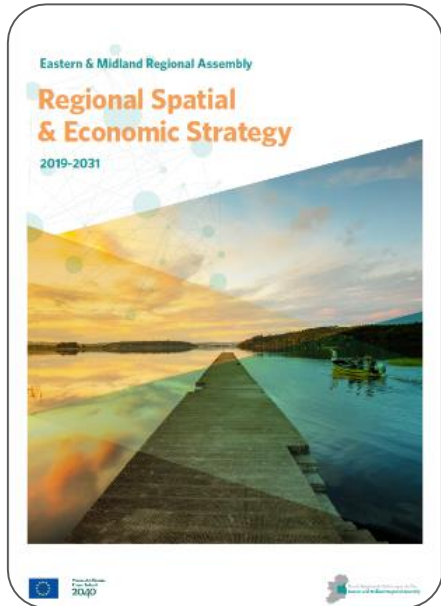


# City Population Growth

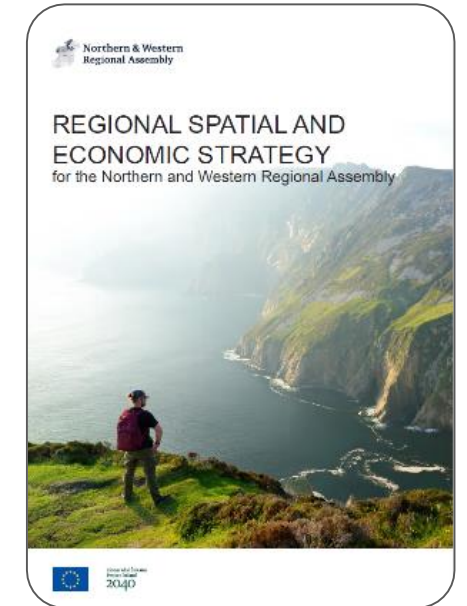
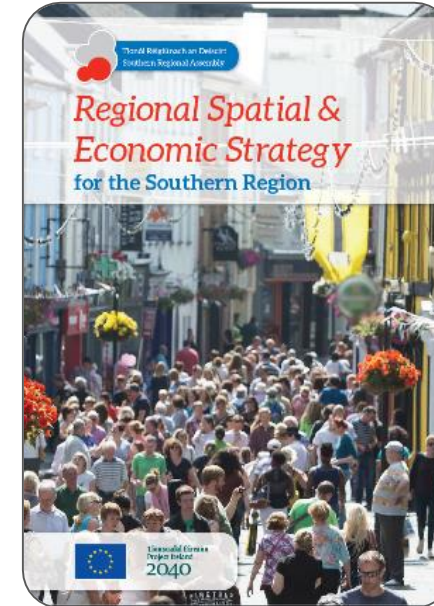
- Growing (regional) cities at scale: key NPF challenge
- Census 2022 – Waterford/Limerick stronger growth
- Overall “city” share of national population growth declined in Census 2022 to **32%** from 2016 (46%)
- 35 towns increased > 1,000 persons
- 70%+ of above growth in city commuter belts of Dublin/Cork
- Implications for transport, services, emissions



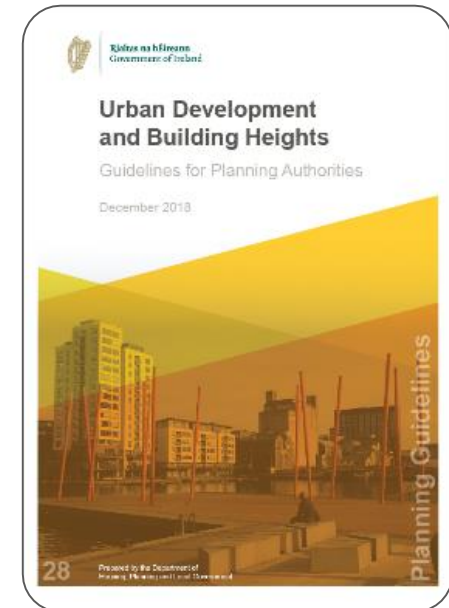
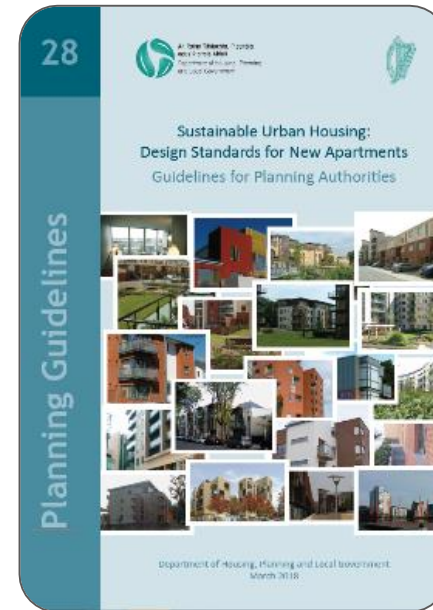
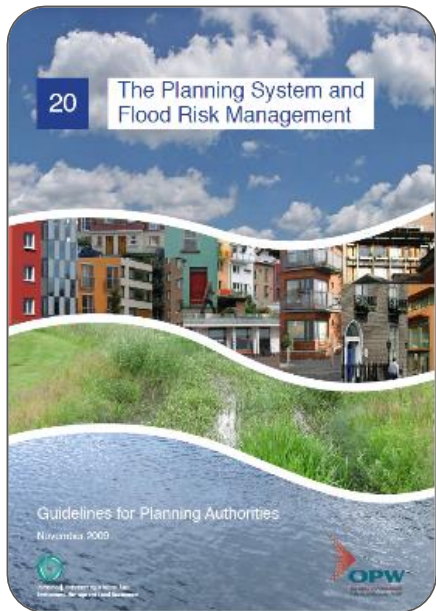
# Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES)



- Link NPF & local planning
- Co-ordinate local authority plans
- Agreed by local authorities in each Regional Assembly
- Your plan-making functions should seek to closely align
- Review/Update will follow NPF update



# Guidelines Published by Minister under S.28 of Act

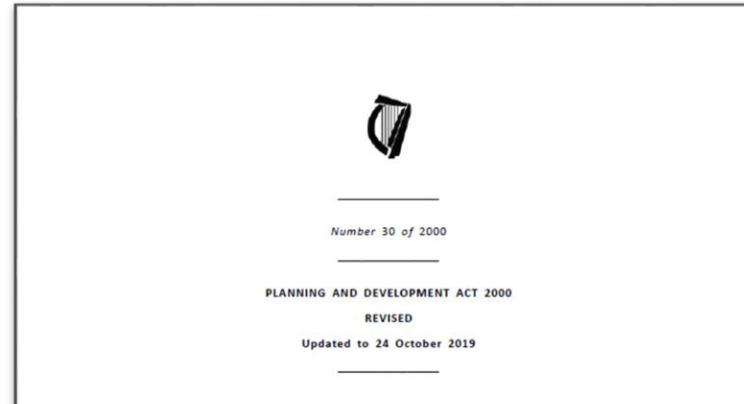


...plans you make must include a statement of consistency under 28(1)(b) or give reasons for departures...



# Assessment of Plans: OPR Focus...

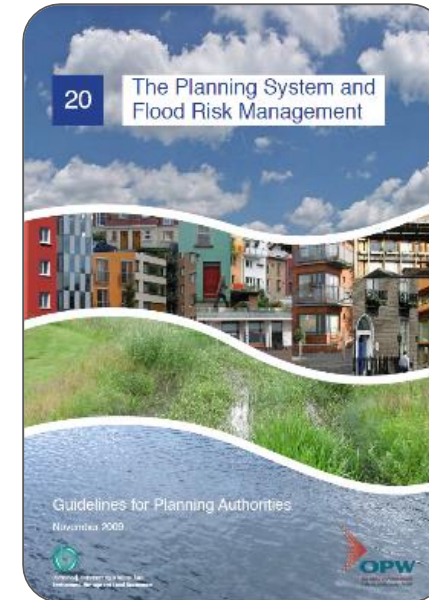
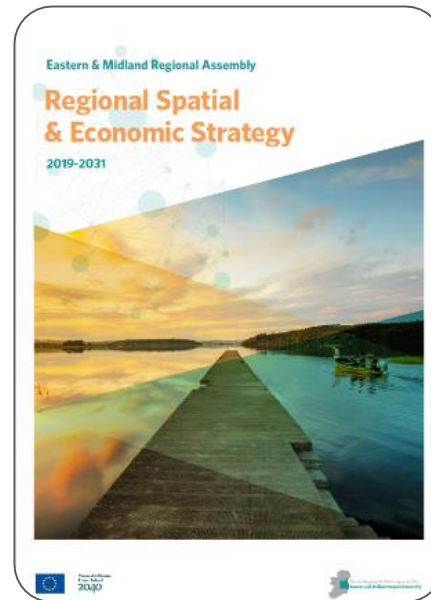
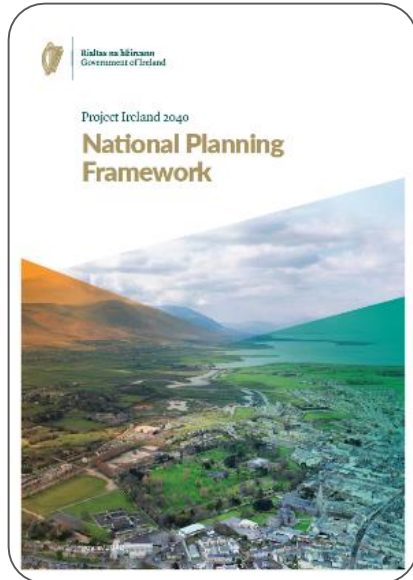
- Mandatory Objectives
- Core Strategy
- Climate Action



PART II  
PLANS AND GUIDELINES  
CHAPTER I  
*Development Plans*

9. Obligation to make development plan.
10. Content of development plans.
11. Preparation of draft development plan.
- 11A. Extension of certain development plans and restriction of *section 11*.
- 11B. Development plans for new administrative areas to be provided for.

# We assess how your plan fits with...



...as well as wider statutory obligations including EU Directive requirements and in Dublin, the Transport Strategy of the National Transport Authority.

# Recap:

## The general scope of our assessment

	Within scope
Check development plan contains all mandatory objectives	✓
Settlement strategy / hierarchy	✓
Check for possible omissions, e.g. no strategic flood risk assessment	✓
Review if site should be included as a Protected Structure	X
Specific design standards	X
Presentation and format of the document	X

# Output and implications of assessments

- (a) **Observations** & (b) **Recommendations**...*necessary to ensure effective coordination of national, regional and local planning....*
- OPR **recommendations** must be addressed and any decision not to comply must be notified to the OPR and reasons given...
- Observations/recommendations are **intended to guide you in making a plan compliant** with legal and policy requirements...
- Recommendations not implemented – **where key policy breaches arise - can result in recommendations to the Minister** to issue Directions to rectify...

# 2024 P&D Bill: Key Changes re Plans



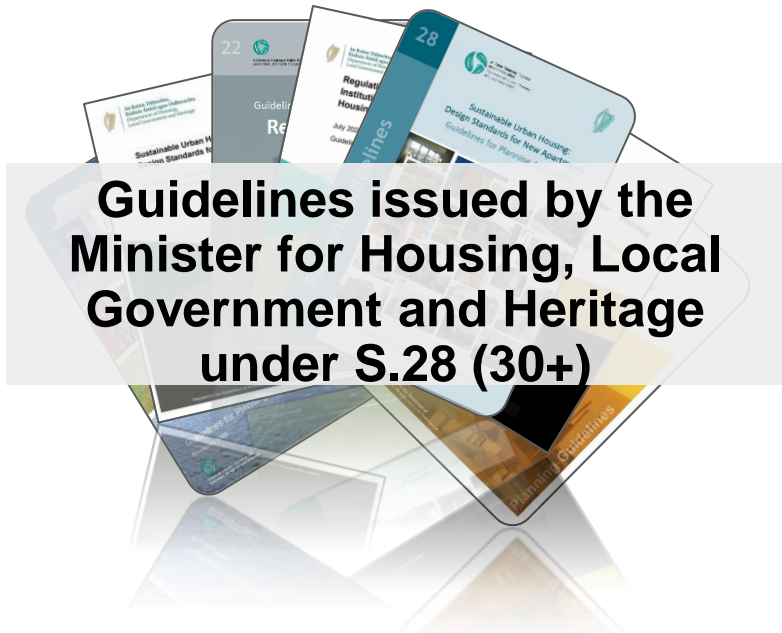
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**+** Review cycle linked to Census process

# 2000 Act

# 2024 Planning Bill



**Guidelines issued by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage under S.28 (30+)**

**Policy Directives issued by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage under S.29 (2)**



**The Minister may issue (subject to Govt approval) a National Planning Statement (NPS) containing:**

- **“National Planning Policies and Measures” to support proper planning and sustainable development; and**
- **“National Planning Policy Guidance” providing guidance on the implementation of the above.**
- **Will provide for clearer framework for policy-making at local level**

# 2000 Act

# 2024 Planning Bill

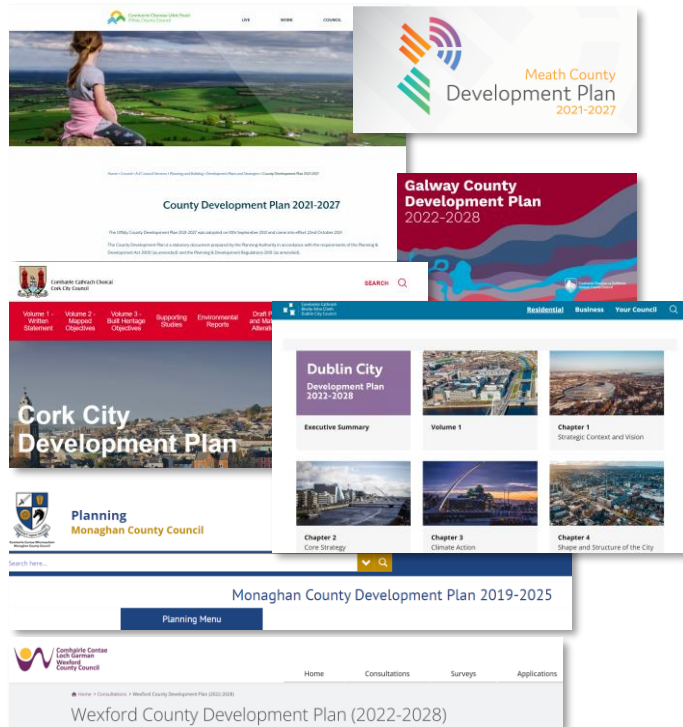
## Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES)



- Enhanced coordination functions in respect of a wider range of planning strategies and policies across county boundaries.
- Enhanced role for Assemblies in coordinating plan-making functions for towns straddling boundaries.
- RSES's must be consistent with the NPF, National Marine Planning Framework and National Planning Policies and Measures

# 2000 Act

## Development Plans



# 2024 Planning Bill

## Key Changes:

- Next plans must contain six thematic strategies:
  1. *Sustainable Development and Regeneration*
  2. *Economic Development*
  3. *Housing Development*
  4. *Sustainable Places and Communities*
  5. *Environment and Climate Change*
  6. *Conservation of Natural and Built Heritage*
- Zoning objectives to be indicated across the full functional area
- 10 year lifespan, review Year 5 – policy and data alignment (census)
- OPR role in development plans streamlined – Minister remains final arbiter on issuing final Direction (OPR may issue draft direction)
- Minister, subject to Government approval and OPR consultation, may issue an urgent Direction to vary a development plan within a specified period, making provision for class of infrastructure or other development of national or strategic importance (emergency provision)



# 2000 Act

## Local Area Plans



# 2024 Planning Bill

## Replaced by 3 types of plans for specific circumstances:

- **Urban Area Plans** for RSES regional growth centres and key towns where the scale of growth requires an integrated approach to planning.
- **Priority Area Plans** for parts of cities/towns with capacity to deliver significant housing or other development or needing bespoke regeneration.
- **Coordinated Area Plans:** prepared by two or more planning authorities for settlements or parts of settlement straddling boundaries as identified in RSES.

**Area Plans to be consistent with the relevant development plan and, for Coordinated Area Plans, with each of the relevant development plans.**

**Provisions of area plans conflicting with development plans will not have effect (to ensure effective coordination).**



# Key points to remember

- Planning: one of your key statutory functions...
- Local planning policies need to address the issues in your communities...
- While also addressing legislatively determined strategies...
- Plan-making: a balancing process...
- Well-thought out plans balancing local and strategic issues will attract investment and give a clear basis for robust decision-making by your CE and national bodies in support of the plan you make...

**Thank you**