

# The Members' Role in the Evolving Planning System



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator



# Place-Making

**Niall Cussen....**

*“This is the essence of what we are trying to achieve”*

**Cllr Anne Colgan....**

*“We need to place the citizen at the centre”*

**Michael Walsh....**

*“Will it make this a better place in 10, 20, 30 years from now?”*



.....THEN



..... NOW



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator



# Planning is Delivering...



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator



**Requires Partnership & Teamwork**

# Evolving Supports/Inputs to LA Planning

## Multi – Agency & Partnership Approach

### Niall Cussen...

*Development Plans now...*

*..Less aspirational, more robust*

*..Provide a framework for investment*

*..Access to range of funding mechanisms*

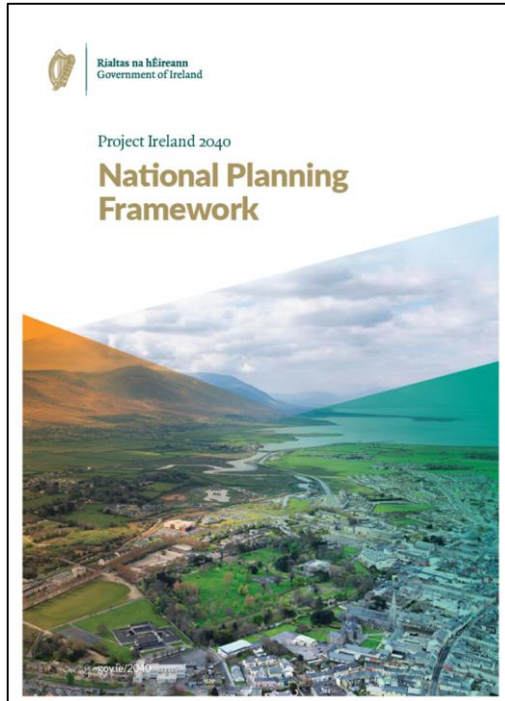
*..Greater opportunities for local areas*





# Plan-Led Planning

**Michael Walsh....** *“It makes sense to have a plan for our country”*

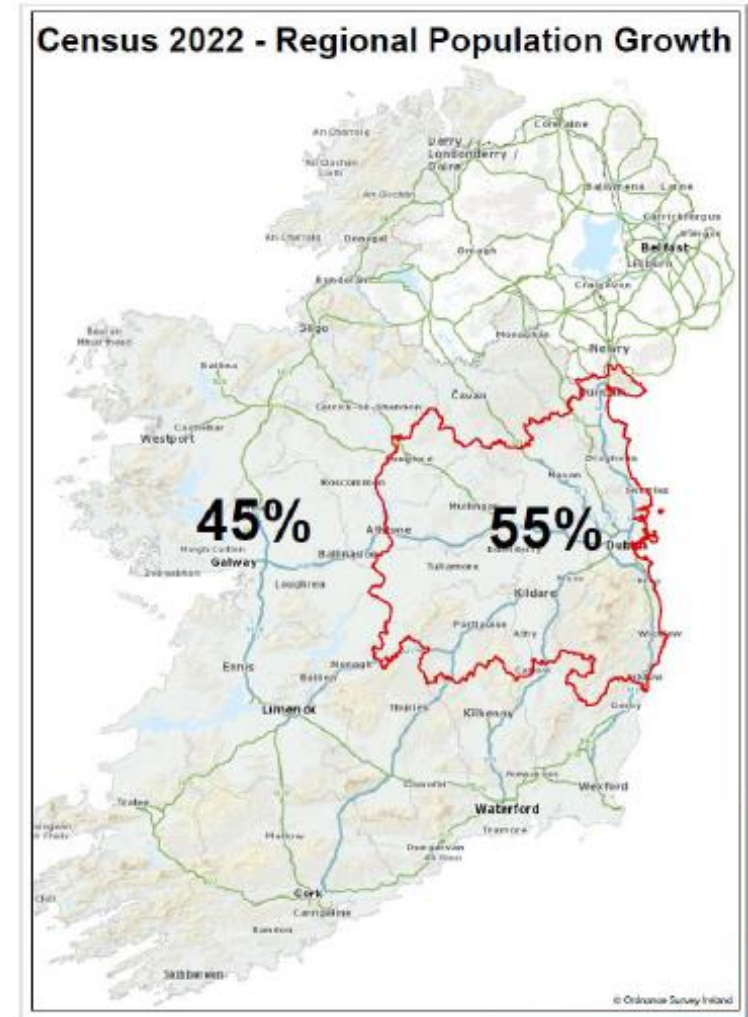
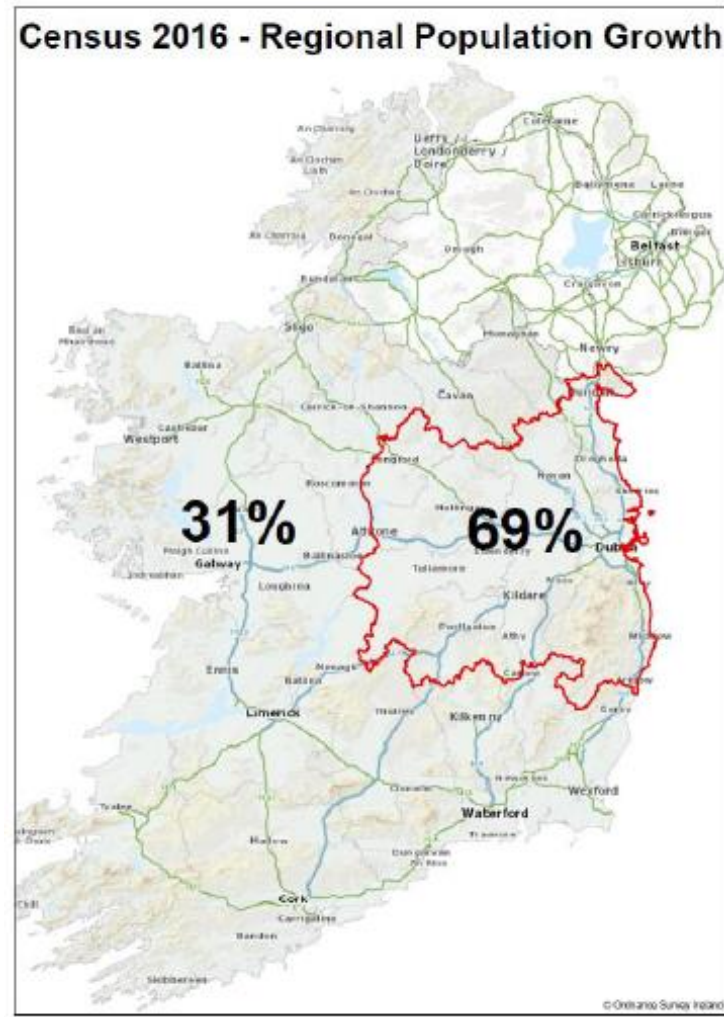


- Government’s high-level spatial policy to 2040
- Backed by capital investment
- Alignment between local plan-making and NPF and NDP secures funding
- Subject to updating at present
  - Incorporating Census 2022
  - Revised population/housing forecasts
  - Updated policy context



# Encouraging signs

## Converging rates of population growth



# Development Plan Preparation

## Key Statutory Function



Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator

### Niall Cussen...

*“The role of Members is central”*

*“You know your area & community better than anybody”*

### Michael Walsh...

*“Is there a more important function than setting the development framework for YOUR area?”*





# Development Plan Preparation

## Early Engagement

- Engage early in the process – Issues & Pre Draft stages
- Executive is there to support – workshops & briefings
- Have the dialogue on strategic / contentious issues

### **Cllr. Anne Colgan**

*“Early engagement & briefings from planners are key supports for Councillors”*

### **Michael Walsh**

*“Potential for meaningful debate in the chamber may be limited”*

*“Once the Plan is published, change is more challenging”*



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator





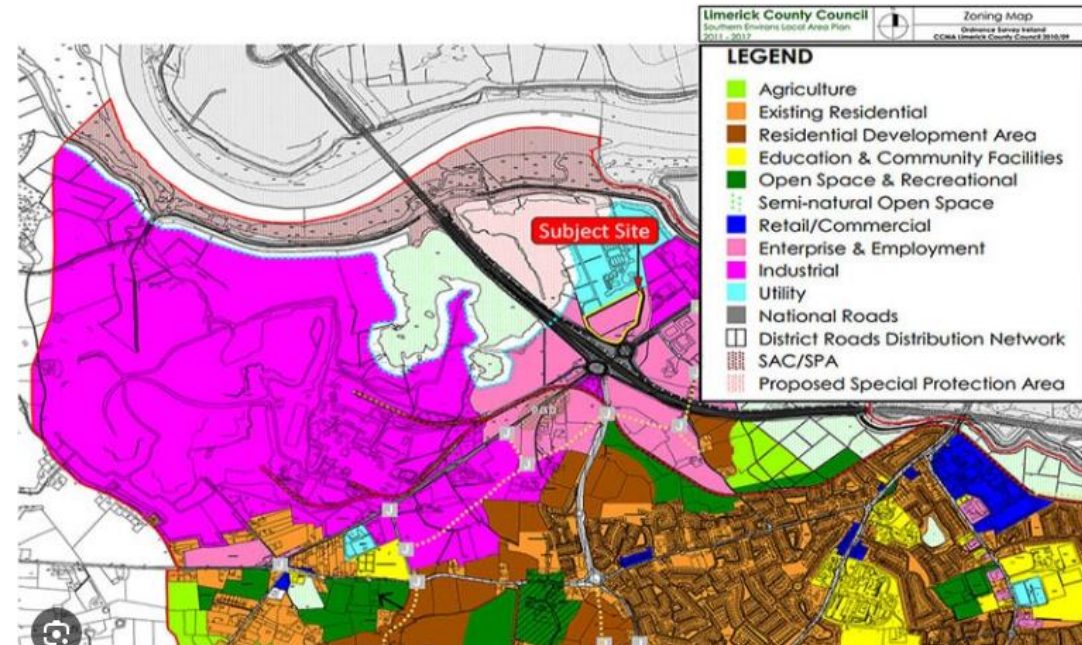
# Development Plan Preparation

## Potential Pitfalls

- **Don't allow zoning to dominate**
  - policies are equally or more important
- **Take care with Social Media**
  - it can be hard to row back from
- **Conflict of Interest**
  - take the precautionary approach, its your reputation
- **Take care drafting Motions**
  - ask planner to assist & state reasons
- **Lobbying**
  - it's good practice to keep records



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator



# Development Plan Adoption

- Act independently and not on representational basis
- Don't allow the loudest voices to dominate

**Cllr. Anne Colgan**

*“The development plan process is not a plebiscite!”*

- Planning Act – obliges Members & officials to act in the long term common good



## Benefits of a good development plan

- Robust decision making
- Framework for Investment
- More potential to deliver for local communities



# Development Plan

## Role of the OPR

- Evaluates Development Plans
- Looks at the strategic
- May issue recommendations and observations

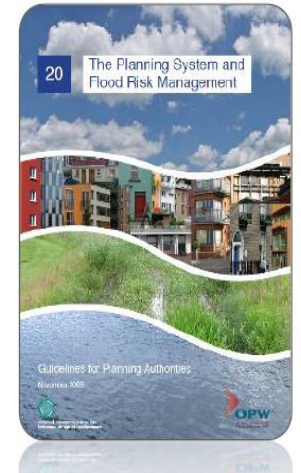
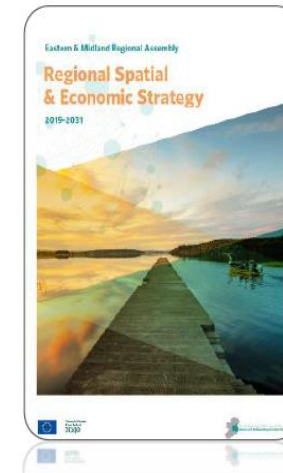
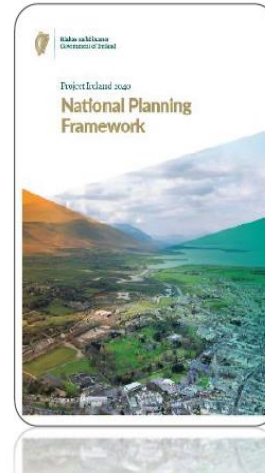
### ***Michael Walsh***

*“We won’t always agree but the view from outside and a level of oversight / tension is healthy and strengthens the overall planning process”*



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator

## 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.





# Integrated Land Use & Transport Planning

Key request from NTA:

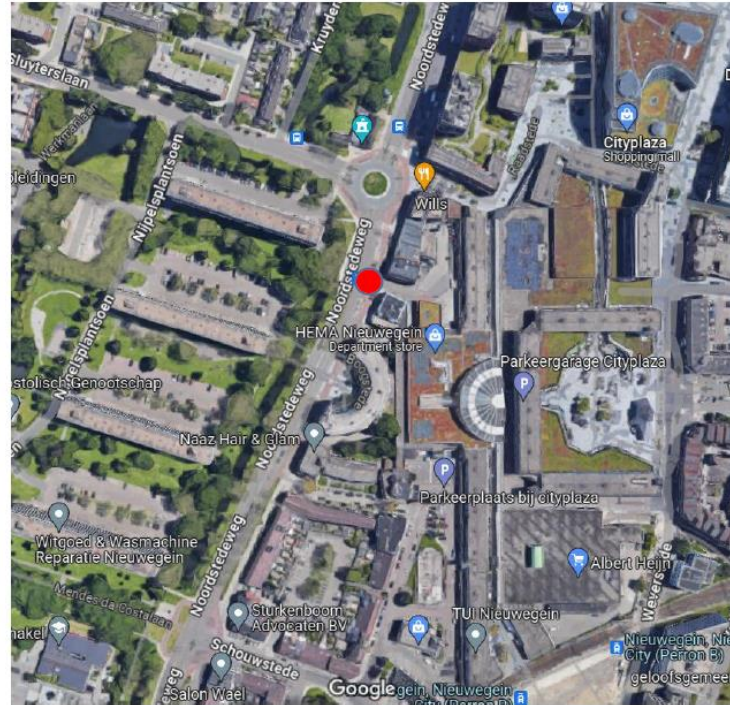
Better Land Use Planning....

Anne Graham

*“Public transport by itself,  
does not deliver access”*

*“Accessible public transport arises  
from the **interaction** between  
**public transport & land use  
pattern**”*

Netherlands



Ireland



Public transport needs compact land use patterns

# Integrated Land Use & Transport Planning

## KEY Request from NTA:

More Priority for...  
Public Transport &  
Active Travel



## Dundrum Local Transport Plan incorporated into the Dundrum Local Area Plan

### Anne Graham

*“Provides a people focussed approach to public realm improvements and also sets a framework for NTA investment in public transport & active travel”*

### Cllr Anne Colgan...

*“as local Councillors, we came together as a group, to agree our approach”*



# Investment can be seen all around Ireland



Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the Planning Regulator





## Towns Implementation Update

- New Town services delivered in Carlow & Clonmel in 2023;
- Planned for delivery or improvement in Sligo, Dundalk, Ennis, Letterkenny, Mullingar, Portlaoise and Tralee;



# Responding to Citizen Representations

**Cllr. Anne Colgan**

*“As the public face of the Local Authority, it is important to manage expectations and understand our Governance Vs. Representational roles”*

*“as Councillors, we need to know enough, but also need to know our limits”*

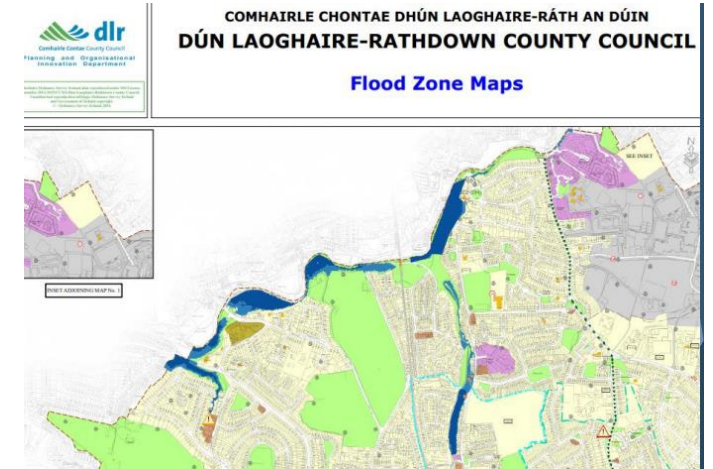
**Michael Walsh**

*“Development management and planning enforcement are minefields”*

*“Members probably thankful they are executive functions”*



How can I object?



Is my site on a flood plan?



What changes can I make to my house?

# Placing the Citizen at the Centre



Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the Planning Regulator

**Cllr. Anne Colgan...**

*“When it comes to citizen engagement, are we doing enough?”*

*“Do we need to do more than the bare statutory requirements?”*



**“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about”**

*Margaret J. Wheatley*

**Initiatives related to Climate Action**



**Need for stronger Change Management role within Local Government**



# Final Messages

## Niall Cussen

*“Planning can be a balancing act – developing local planning policies to address issues in your community while also addressing legislatively determined strategies”*

## Cllr. Anne Colgan

*“Planning involves partnership, trust & compromise”*

## Anne Graham

*“More than ever, we need to work in partnership with Local Authorities”*

## Michael Walsh

*“Don’t be overwhelmed by the seeming complexity of planning, use common sense and let “Common Good” be your arbiter”*



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator



**St Nicholas Quarter - Dundalk**

# The OPR Can Assist...

## Research, Training & Public Awareness

Wealth of resources available at

<https://www.opr.ie/training/>

## Elected Members Training

### Tailored for...

- Elected Members
- The Public
- Planners



Elected Members Training Materials



Role of Elected Members in Planning



Introduction to Planning for Elected Members

# The OPR can Assist...



Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the Planning Regulator

## Public Awareness



*Will be updated to reflect new Planning Act*  
<https://www.opr.ie/planning-leaflets/>

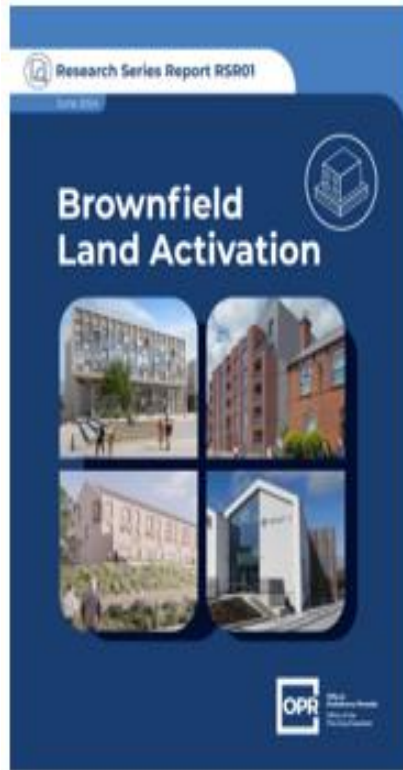


# The OPR also...



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator

## Research



- Planning Issues e.g. Brownfield Land Activation (RSR)
- Planning Performance e.g. Pre-Application Consultation Services – S247 (CSP)
- Planning Practice e.g. Planning for Employment Growth

**Thank You**