



Oifig an
Rialaitheoir Pleanáil
Office of the
Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator

Context - Overview - Outlook

Niall Cussen M.I.P.I Planning Regulator





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Planning in Ireland



31 Planning Authorities



3 Regional Assemblies



200+ Statutory Development Plans
Local Area Plans
Strategic Development Zones



1 An Bord Pleanála

2017 in Numbers

28,077
Planning decisions made

2,623 applications refused

25,454
applications granted

Appeals to
An Bord Pleanála

2,041

22% Decision confirmed

24% Decision reversed

54% Decision Varied



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Opportunities...





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Challenges...

How does the Government plan to tackle the housing crisis?



Grappling with the housing crisis: Fresh approaches needed

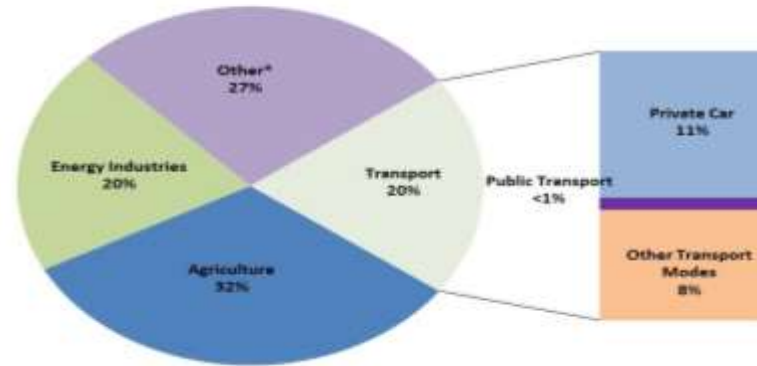
With 90,000 people on social housing lists, we asked five insiders for potential solutions



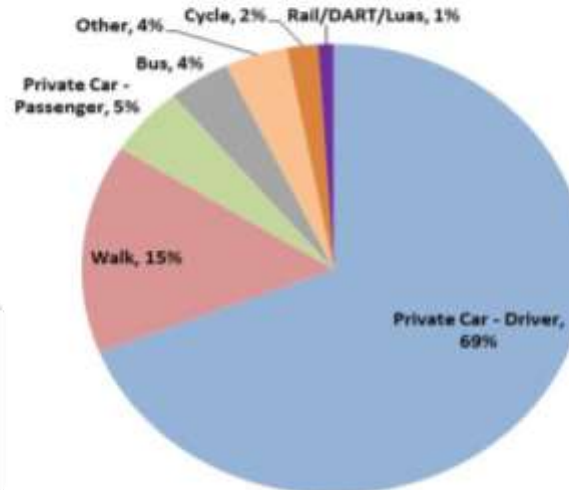
The complex question of why there is a housing shortage

The reason why, at a time of strong demand and rising prices, more homes are not being built

Ireland's GHG emissions per sector (2016)



How do we travel? Modal Share of Ireland's Transport Journeys (2016)





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Outcomes Needed



VS





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Then and Now

1990's	2019+
No national planning framework	NPF (2018)
No regional planning	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (2019)
Planning and Development Act 1963 (as amended)	Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) 944 amendments since 2000 (??!!)
Few EU Directives impacting directly on Planning (EIA)	EIA, SEA, Habitats, WFD, Noise, Public Participation, Services, Aarhus, etc.....
Key Challenges: Economic development??	Key Challenges: Climate, Housing, Sustainable development, Communities, Infrastructure delivery, Smarter Mobility, Biodiversity, Water Quality, Environmental Noise etc...
1x statutory planning guidelines	>30 Ministerial Guidelines and Directives
88 planning authorities - ABP	31 planning authorities - 3 regional assemblies - ABP - EPA - Land Development Agency
Judicial reviews of planning decisions (?)	150+ JR's on planning related matters?? S50B



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Purpose

- ▶ Oversight strengthening public confidence in Ireland's planning process
- ▶ Delivery of better planning services by planning authorities
- ▶ Research on planning to assist policy and practice
- ▶ Public awareness of and understanding of planning



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Research

- ▶ **Much research being undertaken - EPA/ESRI/Housing Agency/HEI's - co-ordination key**
- ▶ **Things we need to know to inform next generation of plans..**
 - ▶ **GIS tracking of development patterns to measure the “distance to (NPF) target”**
 - ▶ **Where/what type of housing we are providing vs what we need (HDNA)**
 - ▶ **Climate and planning - demonstrating we can measure climate benefits in selecting right policies**
 - ▶ **ICT innovation to better enable the public to be at the heart of planning - 3D visualisation**



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Plans

- ▶ OPR part of Project Ireland 2040 implementation re brownfield targets - tackling vacancy - compact development
- ▶ All plans need to be examined and in many cases reviewed in the light of NPF later in 2019 into 2020
- ▶ OPR will advise through all stages of plan-making process
- ▶ New delivery tools: Project 2040 funds - Land Development Agency - Vacant Site Levy - Serviced Site Fund - Housing funds - LG reforms
- ▶ Engagement and housing/planning working together will ensure policy alignment/delivery - Directions: last resort





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Assessing Plans

- ▶ **OPR will evaluate plans at strategic level:**
 - ▶ **Pre-plan making stage; (issues papers - this is important to play a proactive and positive role)**
 - ▶ **Draft plan/amended draft stages/when recommendations have not been complied with.**
- ▶ **OPR must address climate change, consistency with NPF, RSES, Guidelines issued by Minister under S28 Act, Directives under S29, Directions under S31...**
- ▶ **Housing/Core Strategy co-ordination with NPF is a key criteria...**
- ▶ **Development Plan and Housing Needs Demand Assessment guidance from DHPLG (2019)**
- ▶ **OPR will develop - with stakeholders - an objective plans assessment methodology**
- ▶ **Location of housing and employment vs climate, urban regeneration, sustainable rural renewal strategies will be key issues to address in next round of plans....**



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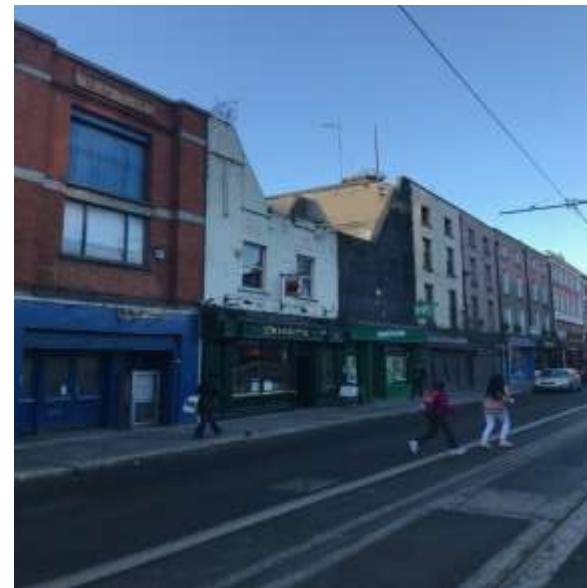
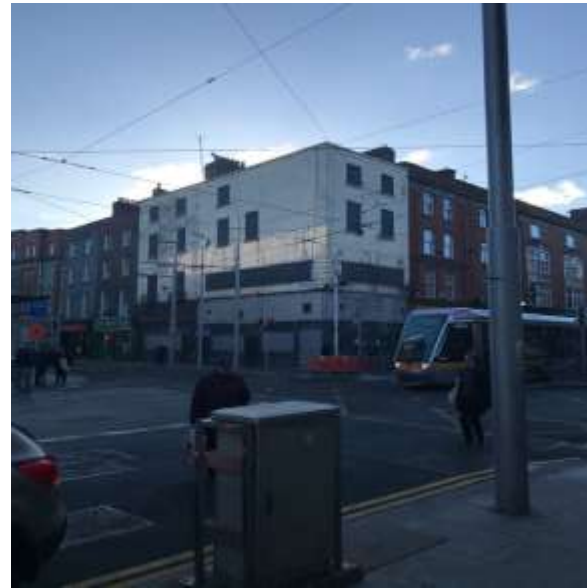
Focus of Past Plans?





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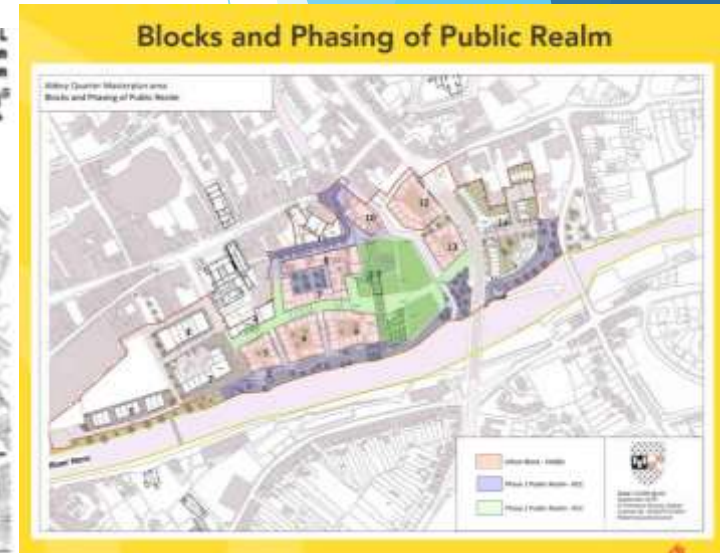
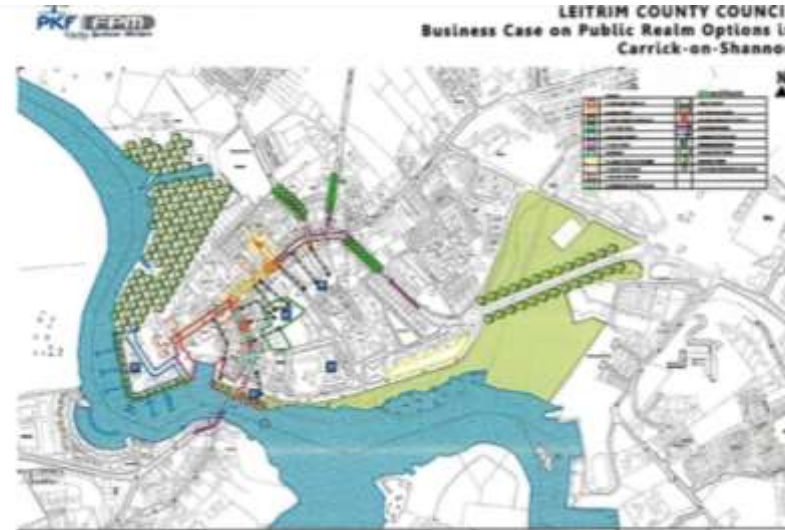
Future Focus?





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Promising Signs?





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Elephant in Room?



&



Or?



- ▶ Enabling an alternative
- ▶ Only housing delivery in smaller towns is LA??
- ▶ Only house-building outside cities is rural???
- ▶ How can we activate more private delivery?
- ▶ Infrastructure gaps - Irish Water linkage
- ▶ Rural Regeneration and Development Fund - major opportunity for housing and planning practitioners to play their part
- ▶ Tools are there! Is it our priority?
- ▶ Are housing/planning practitioners working together to solve this problem?
- ▶ Context for OPR assessment of plans



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Reviews

- ▶ Aimed at regular “health checks” of the effectiveness of our planning authorities performance and outcomes delivered/areas where policy/delivery could be enhanced
- ▶ Interactions between planning/housing/community offer huge potential
- ▶ OPR will adopt a proactive approach to PA review function - a resource for the sector
- ▶ Initial step: develop a review methodology drawing on best practice/enhanced indicators eg Scottish Planning Performance Framework (Draft for consultation by end Sept)
 - ▶ *Quality of development planning; (comprehensiveness/cohesiveness of plans)*
 - ▶ *Effectiveness in delivery of housing supply matched to effective assessment of need;*
 - ▶ *Efficacy in timescales re project planning and decision making;*
 - ▶ *Performance in dealing with legacies including enforcement; and*
 - ▶ *Feedback from key agencies integral to planning including statutory consultees.*



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Structure

Planning Regulator

Director of Planning Reviews/Examinations

- Assistant Director
- Senior Planner
- Higher Executive Officer
- Executive Officer
- Clerical Officer

- Stakeholder engagement
- Review methodology
- Review Programme
- Caseload management
- Research support
- OPR Legal

Deputy Regulator and Director of Evaluation of Local Authority Plans

- Assistant Director
- Senior Planner x 2
- GIS Officer
- Higher Executive Officer
- Executive Office

- Stakeholder engagement
- Assessment methodology
- Policy analysis
- Research support
- Caseload management
- OPR Communications

Director of Planning Research Training and Public Awareness

- Assistant Director
- Senior Research Planner
- Higher Executive Officer
- Executive Officer
- Clerical Officer

- Stakeholder engagement
- Planning L&D Programme
- Corporate Services
 - Finance & Payroll
 - Human Resources
 - ICT & Accommodation



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Outlook

- ▶ **Build full OPR capability by year-end - people, systems, premises, reputation**
- ▶ **Be ready for high level of plans coming forward in 2020 and beyond and wider functions**
- ▶ **Housing and planning practitioners need to work together to enhance plan quality**
- ▶ **“Let join the dots”:** - climate - renewal - sustainability - activation (LA role crucial)
- ▶ **Research/public awareness/training (new cllrs) is crucial...**
- ▶ **Exciting times ahead!**



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Thank You