



Directors of Planning Services and Senior Planners, Local Authorities
Directors and Senior Planners, Regional Assemblies
Chairperson and Director of Planning, An Bord Pleanála
Planning Regulator and Deputy Regulator, OPR
LGMA

23 December 2020

Ref: NRUP 02/2020

A Chairde,

RE. Planning Update, December 2020

As we approach the end of difficult and challenging year, I would like to thank you and your planning teams for your co-operation and support, and in particular for the hard work and effort that has kept our planning processes and planning system functioning as an essential service throughout. While much of 2020 was taken up with addressing the impacts of Covid-19, we can look forward to new opportunities and recovery as 2021 progresses. Accordingly, I wish to briefly update you on a number of planning matters.

Revised Apartment Guidelines

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien T.D., has today issued updated *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The purpose of the updated apartment guidelines is to give effect to restrictions on commercial co-living/shared accommodation development, addressed in Section 5.0 of the guidelines document. All other elements of the apartment guidelines remain unchanged. The updated guidelines are dated 23rd December 2020.

Housing Demand and Housing Supply Targets

Further to publication of an independent ESRI research report that had been commissioned by the Department, *Structural Housing Demand at County Level*, a Ministerial Circular and new Section 28 Planning Guidelines, *Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning* were issued by Minister O'Brien



to Planning Authorities, An Bord Pleanála and the Office of the Planning Regulator, on Friday last 18th December 2020.

The purpose of the circular and guidance is to set out a consistently applicable methodology that enables National Planning Framework (NPF) population targets to be translated into household demand projections and integrated housing supply targets at both national and local levels. In support of this, annualised ESRI household projection data for each County to 2031 is being made available in excel spreadsheet format.

The ESRI research and Housing Supply Target methodology also inform (i.e. will be consistent with) the parameters for the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) tool that is currently being piloted by the Department's Housing Policy section in a number of local authorities, for roll-out to all in 2021.

Planning and Development and Residential Tenancies Act 2020

This legislation was signed into law on Saturday 19th December 2020 and includes several important planning provisions, one of which amends Section 11(3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, to now also include the option of an on-line public meeting at the outset of the development plan process, in lieu of an 'in-person' public meeting.

It is emphasised that in normal circumstances, *both* on-line and in-person meetings may be held and are encouraged as part of a planning authority's public consultation strategy for a development plan process (this will be addressed, inter alia, in the forthcoming development plan guidelines). It is also noted that this is a permanent amendment to the Act, i.e. is not time-limited. My colleague Eamonn Kelly, Principal Officer, will separately communicate in more detail in respect of this and the other provisions of this Act, with regard to matters relating to the Covid-19 public health emergency and the substitute consent process.

Updated Planning Guidelines for Public Consultation

While much of the original work programme for 2020 was subject to disruption, we have been progressing key planning guidelines and expect to bring forward updated ministerial guidelines for planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, for public consultation early in the New Year in 2021. These will include as a matter of urgency, guidelines on Development Plan preparation, which it is intended will be issued in conjunction with guidelines on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. There is also further work underway in respect of sustainable settlement generally and in particular matters such as residential density and rural housing.



Current planning policies and guidelines continue to apply until new or updated policy is enacted through legislation or issued as guidance.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to wish you and your planning teams a safe and peaceful Christmas break and look forward to working with you again in 2021

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Hogan', is written over a horizontal line.

Paul Hogan

Principal Adviser/Chief Planner

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage