



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

Water Quality and Planning

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1 Context

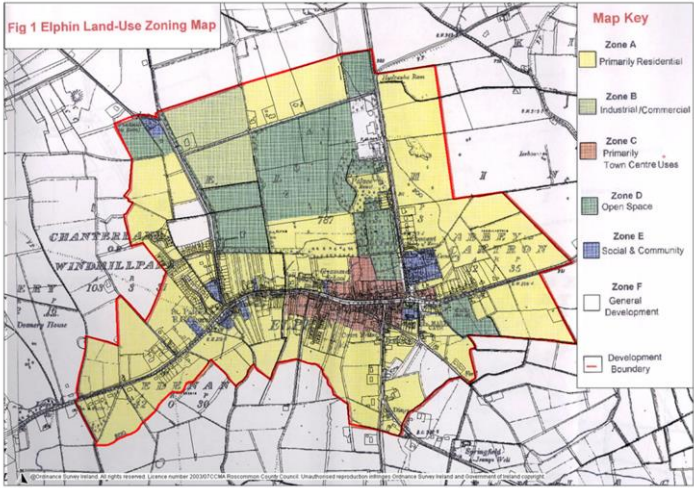
Preliminary Census Data



- The Census preliminary returns suggest – in a general sense – that population growth at this point is broadly in line with National Planning Framework projections, which aims to shift to more regionally balanced, city-focused and compact growth.
- Highest population in a Census since 1841
- Population of 5.1 million on 03 April 2022 – an increase of 7.6% from Census 2016
- All counties show population growth since 2016
- In the six years between Census 2016 and Census 2022, there was net inward migration of more than 190,000
- Housing stock increased to 2.1m (+6%)
- Vacant dwellings (excluding holiday homes) fell to 166,752 (-9%)



Room for Improvement...





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2 Planning System

Legislation



EU Directives

- While spatial planning policy and legislation remains a national competence for each EU member state, there are a range of EU Directives that must be considered when formulating planning and land-use policies through the development plan preparation process.
- EU Directives are normally translated into Irish law by means of statutory regulation, which sets out any particular obligations on the planning system, including requirements to be integrated into the development plan.
- EU Directives that relate to development plan considerations in relation to water quality include:
 - Floods Directive 2007/60/EC
 - Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
 - Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC
 - Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC
- Many of the requirements of these Directives are incorporated into the mandatory objectives to be included in the development plan under Section 10 of the Act (10(2)(b)). However, it is the responsibility of planning authorities to ensure that the appropriate planning and land-use-related aspects of these Directives that interact with the development plan system are properly reflected in the plan preparation processes.



Source: EPA Water Quality in 2020 – An Indicators Report

Legislation



Mandatory Objective: Environment

Section 10(2)(cb) of the Act provides that a development plan shall include objectives for:

“the promotion of compliance with environmental standards and objectives established —

- (i) for bodies of surface water, by the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009;
- (ii) for groundwater, by the European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010; which standards and objectives are included in river basin management plans (within the meaning of Regulation 13 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003)”

The development plan should include objectives that refer to the Water Framework Directive and achieving good ecological status for all waters in line with the River Basin Management Plans and meeting the targets of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. These objectives should be linked to indicators such as the status of water bodies (groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine, coastal, bathing, drinking waters) as reported by the EPA and the number of settlements in compliance with Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD).

The Department is currently preparing specific planning guidelines to assist planning authorities in meeting their obligations under the Water Framework Directive.

National Planning Framework



- National Planning Framework core aims:
- Regional Balance 50% growth outside EMRA.
- Compact Growth New 'Infill / targets for settlements to reduce sprawl.
- Sustainable management of water

“Planning is critically important to the management of water resources. The planning system both directly and indirectly influences effective water management. This includes water service provision, river basin management, landscape, flood risk planning, coastal and marine management and climate change adaptation. Accordingly, statutory development plans must ensure the integration of sustainable water management considerations”.



National Planning Framework



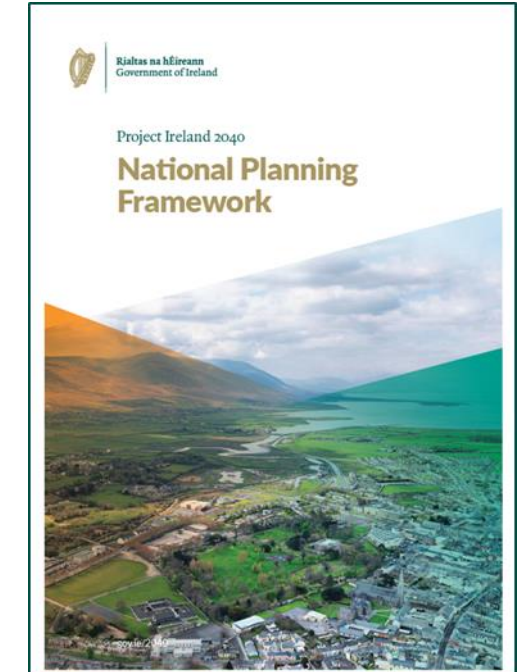
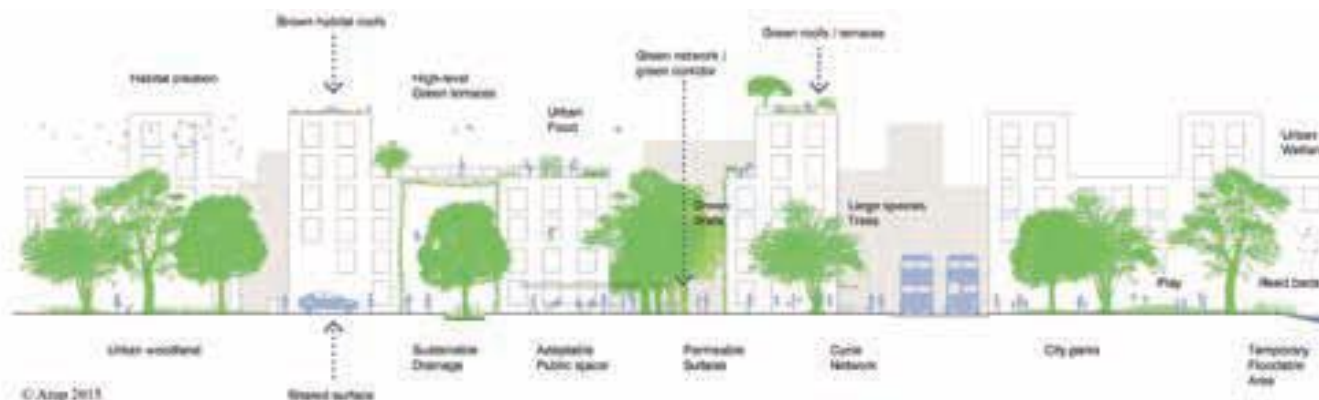
National Policy Objective 57

Enhance water quality and resource management by:

- Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding in accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
- Ensuring that River Basin Management Plan objectives are fully considered throughout the physical planning process.
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), non-porous surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places.

National Policy Objective 58

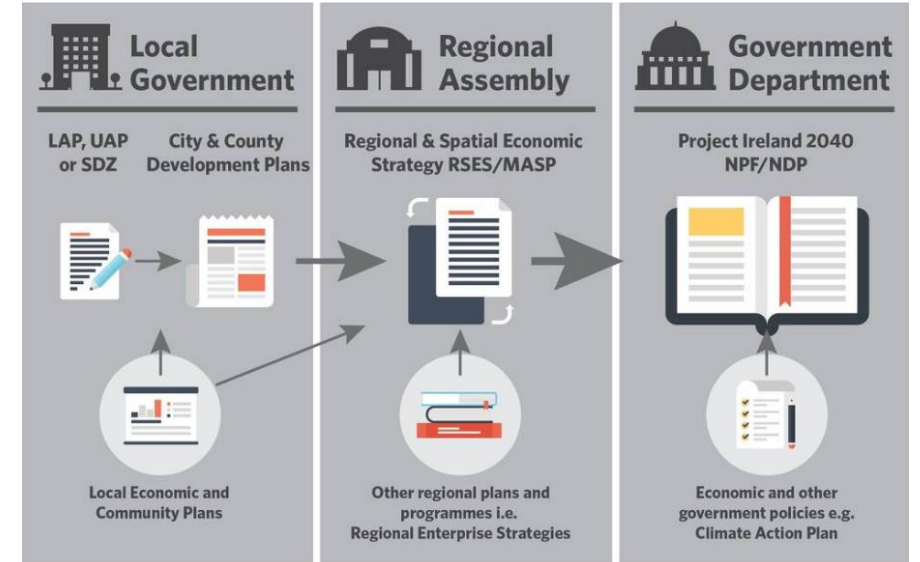
Integrated planning for Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.



Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies



- **12-year strategic planning and economic development framework**
- *High quality green and blue spaces are important not just for nature but health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of an increasingly urban society and increasing settlement densities.*
- All three Regional Assembly RSEs support sustainable drainage systems, blue green infrastructure and nature based solutions.



Development Plan Guidelines, 2022



- Identification of water services provision and consultation with Irish Water – Settlement Capacity Audits – Serviced and Serviceable
- Integrating sustainable management solutions
- Development Plan Objectives: Good Practice

Objective: Water Quality

To promote compliance with environmental standards and objectives established for surface and groundwater bodies under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

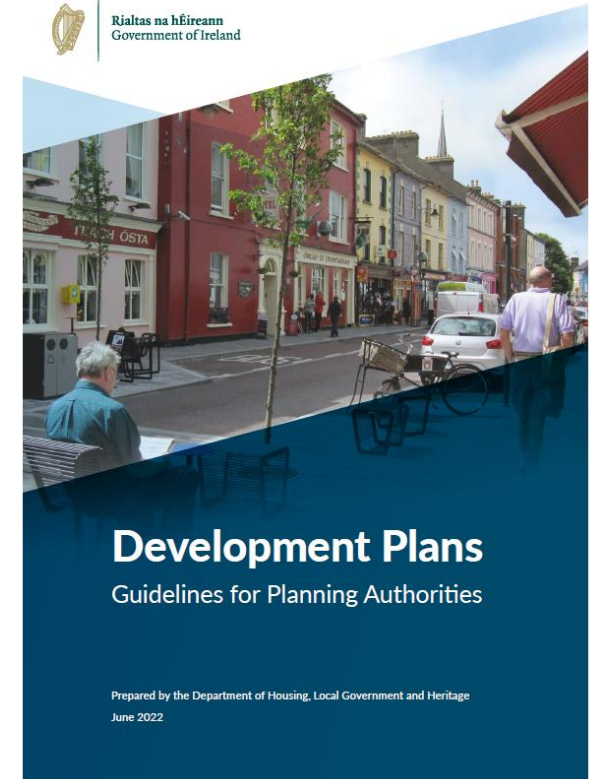
Indicator: EPA county data on the WFD groundwater quality monitoring programme. Also, the EPA 'Water Quality Indicators' dataset reports annually on surface water quality and can be used as an important benchmark for water quality trends.

- Development Plan Objectives: Approaches to be avoided

Objective: Sustainable Urban Drainage

"To investigate the feasibility of preparing Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) guidelines during the lifetime of the plan"

Comment: While the aspiration is positive, the success of this Objective can be more clearly measured by linking to specific SUDS solutions that can be implemented, for example to develop surface water management plans at a settlement level and integrate with Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) and site level plans and projects. Linking to measurable indicators, such as compliance with the Water Framework Directive is also a suitable approach.

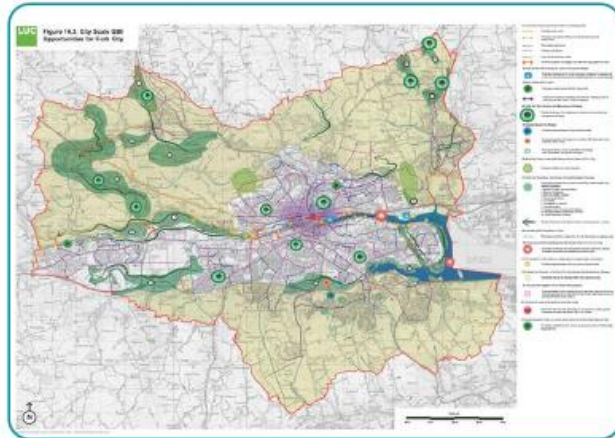


Development Plan Guidelines, 2022



CASE STUDY : Cork City Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Cork City Council prepared a Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy that considers GBI opportunities in Cork City not only for the 2022-2028 Development Plan, but also over successive plan periods up to 2040 to achieve a healthy, green and connected city.



The plan takes into account the ecosystem services that natural systems provide and promotes biodiversity and habitat connectivity as well as access to open spaces and recreation. The GBI Strategy identifies key blue infrastructure such as rivers, streams and wetlands along with traditional green infrastructure such as woodlands, parks and gardens. This approach will enable the strategic investment and planning of GBI projects addressing biodiversity and climate action in Cork City and aligns with UN Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) to allow for the strategic consideration of life on land (SDG 15) with life below water (SDG 14) in a holistic manner.

Source: Cork City Development Plan corkcity.ie

CASE STUDY : Case Study – Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment

Rivers, lakes and streams are an integral part of our environment and if managed appropriately can significantly improve the quality of life for people in urban areas. This should be an objective within all development plans. This guideline document by Inland Fisheries Ireland²⁷ sets out guidance to protect the riparian zone that runs along a watercourse through the use of buffer zones, nature based Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), instream rehabilitation, climate/ flood risk and recreational planning.



Source: Inland Fisheries Ireland www.fisheriesireland.ie

The Guide recommends development standards, policies and objectives be set per watercourse. These can be mapped and integrated with flood risk, Natura 2000 designated sites, habitat and amenities mapping. Planning authorities should incorporate a nature based approach using soft-engineering techniques and native vegetation to minimise the impact of development planning on natural river processes. The incorporation of the riparian zone into a network of linear parks, walks and cycle routes in the urban environment can also improve the amenity value of a site and bring significant health and well-being benefits for the public. Taking this multifunctional zoned approach to riparian protection, not only makes space for water providing for better climate resilience but also leads to better place-making and integrates well with broader nature-based solutions to surface water management and Rainwater Management Planning for urban areas.

²⁶ prepared in conjunction with the OPW and published under Section 28 of the Act.

²⁷ www.fisheriesireland.ie/what-we-do/protection/environmental-protection/guidance-for-urban-watercourses



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3 Water Quality and Planning

Climate, Water and Strategic Planning



- Climate Action objectives integrated into NPF – compact growth
- Ensuring flood risk management informs place-making by avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- Integrating sustainable water management solutions, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS), permeable surfacing and green roofs, to create safe places;
- Integrating planning for Green Infrastructure and ensuring ecosystem services are incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.





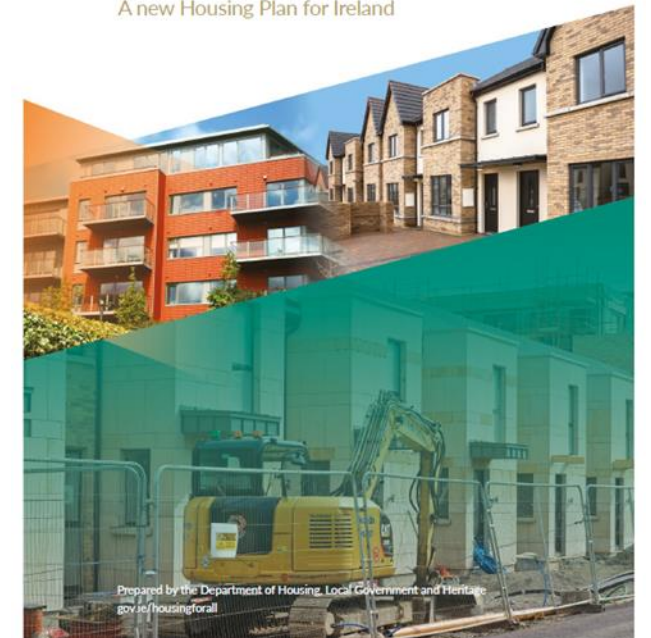
Plan-Making

- **Development plans (31) review process advancing – 23 adopted.**
- **Focus on Local Area Plans in 2023.**
- **Key Role of the OPR to evaluate**
- **Ministerial Directions**



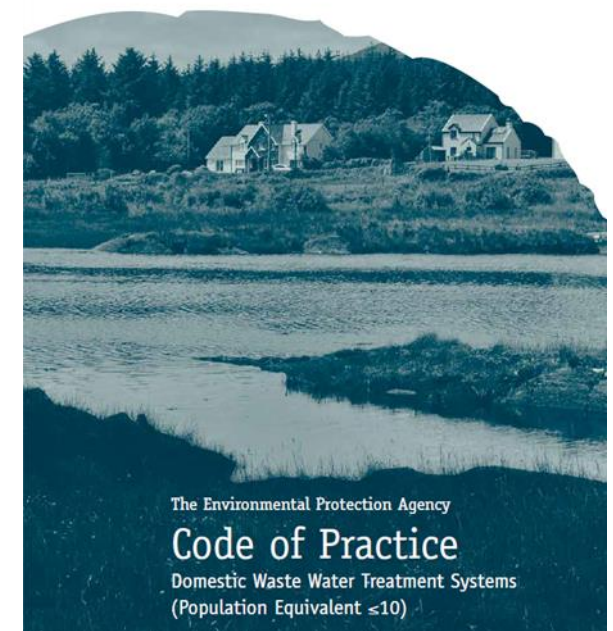
Housing for All

A new Housing Plan for Ireland



Development Pressures

- Development exerts many pressures on aquatic ecosystems.
- Issues such as misconnections, urban runoff, discharges and combined storm overflows, modifications, impervious surfaces, non-performing domestic waste water treatment systems, etc.
- Management requires a holistic approach in terms of; Planning, flooding, surface water networks, biodiversity, hydromorphology and water quality.
- In addition there is an opportunity to take a more comprehensive and strategic approach to;
River rehabilitation and Green infrastructure.



Challenges/ opportunities of water management



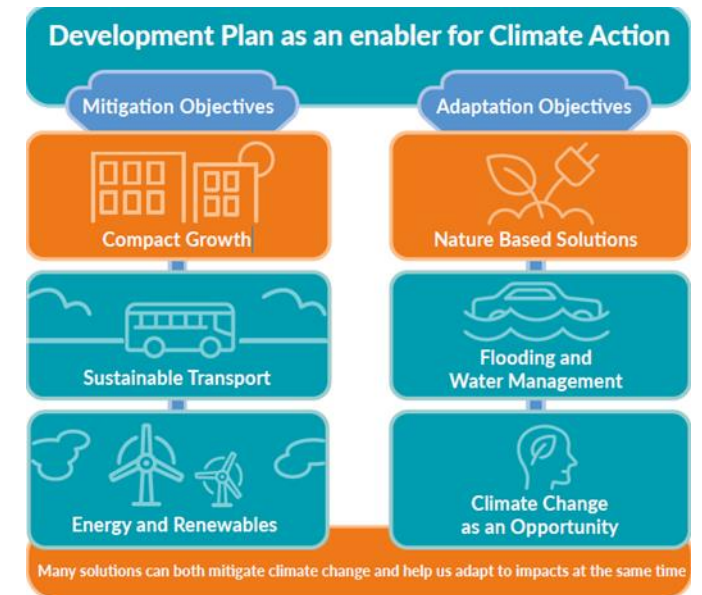
A key focus for Plans at a strategic level – Needs to be Plan-Led

Holistic response required by varying stakeholders (local authorities, OPW, IW, EPA, Department's etc);

Need for plan-led response such as the incorporation of flood risk management, supporting infrastructure that improves water quality such as green / blue infrastructure - Opportunity for integration into urban spaces and amenities;

Compact urban growth - opportunity for SuDs and nature-based solutions to be built-in at the earliest stage – place-making;

Numerous funding initiatives such as URDF, Town Centre First, Irish Water Small towns and Villages Growth programme.





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