



Planning and Development Act 2024 Commencement Circular

Number: 2025/01

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To: Directors of Planning in each local authority

CC: Chief Executives
Senior Planners
An Bord Pleanála
Office of the Planning Regulator
Directors of Regional Assemblies
Mayor of Limerick
Land Development Agency

Identification of Suitable Sites for Potential Candidate Urban Development Zones

Commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22 of the Planning and Development Act 2024

Purpose of Circular

This circular notifies planning authorities and other key stakeholders of the commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Act of 2024). These provisions set out the initial steps in a broader process concerning the designation of a candidate 'urban development zone' or 'UDZ'.

By way of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Commencement) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 239 of 2025) Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22 of the Act of 2024 come into effect from 9th June 2025. A copy of this circular and the Commencement Order will be published online at www.gov.ie/planning.

1. Commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22

1.1. Key messages

- The overall aim of the UDZ process under Part 22 of the Act of 2024 is to provide for an updated and more flexible approach to the masterplanning and delivery of areas with significant potential for large scale development and the associated necessary infrastructure, replacing the provisions providing for the Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) process under Part IX of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
- Chapter 2 of Part 22 provides for the identification by a planning authority of a 'suitable site'. This is a site in the functional area of the planning authority where



development may be of significant economic, social or environmental benefit to the State and be in the common good.

- Only Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22 come into operation from 9th June 2025. Chapter 1 consists of section 596 and Chapter 2 consists of sections 597 to 600. It is anticipated that the remaining Chapters of Part 22 (providing for matters such as candidate UDZs, planning frameworks, development schemes and UDZ designation) will come into effect alongside Part 3 of the Act of 2024.
- The commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of the Act of 2024 has no impact on the operation of the Planning and Development Act 2000 or any existing SDZs designated under that Act.

1.2. Summary of new legislation

1.2.1. Chapter 1 of Part 22

- Section 596 (Interpretation) contains a list of definitions of terms used in Part 22.

1.2.2. Chapter 2 of Part 22

- Section 597 (Planning authority may identify suitable sites) provides that a planning authority may identify sites in its functional areas where development may be of significant economic, social or environmental benefit to the State and be in the common good. Such sites are referred to as “suitable sites”.
- Section 598 (Land Development Agency and regional assemblies may bring sites to attention of planning authority) provides that the Land Development Agency and any regional assembly may notify a planning authority of any site in their functional area which they consider to be a suitable site. Where the Land Development Agency or a regional assembly notifies a planning authority it must also notify the Minister.
- Section 599 (Minister may require planning authority to identify suitable sites) provides that the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage may require all or certain planning authorities to identify suitable sites. Unless the Minister specifies a longer period, a planning authority must comply with such a request within 4 months (or within 5 months where the planning authority also prepares a ‘draft development scheme’). Where a planning authority is unable to identify a suitable site it must inform the Minister of the areas that were considered and the reasons why they are not considered to be suitable sites.
- Section 600 (Information to be provided to Minister in relation to suitable sites) provides a list of information to be provided by a planning authority to the Minister following a request made under section 599. This includes a map of each suitable site and an indication of the nature, size and scale of development and the infrastructure required. The Minister may, if needed, prescribe additional information and documents to be provided.



1.3. Transitional provisions

- UDZs are a new element of planning legislation and have not featured before now. For this reason there are no transitional provisions for the purposes of Chapters 1 & 2 of Part 22.

2. Partial repeal of the Planning and Development Act 2000

The commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22 has no effect on the operation of the Planning and Development Act 2000. No provisions are to be repealed and there are no consequential amendments to other legislation.

3. Corresponding regulations

There is no secondary legislation coming into effect alongside the commencement of Chapters 1 and 2 of Part 22.

4. Commencement schedule for remaining Parts of the Act of 2024

Details of the proposed phased commencement of the Act of 2024 is available to view under Chapter 10 of the Implementation Plan available to view at www.gov.ie/planning. The remaining Chapters of Part 22 are due to be commenced alongside Part 3 of the Act of 2024 (for further information see Block B of the proposed commencement schedule).

5. Further information

An appendix to this circular provides responses to some frequently asked questions.

A dedicated website for the Act of 2024 has been launched to provide updates, further information and useful resources. The website can be accessed at www.gov.ie/planning.

Any enquiries regarding this circular or the commencement of the Act of 2024 can be emailed to the Department at planningreform@housing.gov.ie

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Jones'.

Issued by: Mary Jones, Principal, Planning Legislation Reform Unit



Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What type of lands are suitable for identification as suitable sites for the purpose of designating a candidate UDZ?

It is intended that the candidate UDZ and UDZ designations will be applicable to large-scale urban areas in single or multiple land ownerships, that could include public and/or private lands which have good public transport links and where comprehensive development opportunities have the potential to ensure the efficient and sustainable use of land to create well-functioning and sustainable communities which integrate with their surroundings. Given the significant scale of development proposed and the need to prioritise these areas for development, they are intended to be a focus for State investment, in particular in terms of infrastructure investment. UDZs will appropriately be located in areas which are under-utilised and are within or in close proximity to established settlements, in order to ensure that development responds to the compact growth objectives set out within the National Planning Framework.

Q2. Do all local authorities need to identify a suitable site?

No. Chapter 1 and 2 of Part 22 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 do not place an obligation on local authorities to identify suitable sites. Due to the strategic scale and transport-led nature of candidate UDZs and UDZs, the designation would not be appropriate for smaller-scale development areas. However other provisions within the Act of 2024, such as those provisions which relate to Priority Area Plans, would be more appropriate for this purpose.

Q3. What are the benefits of identifying suitable sites?

The process of identifying and designating a suitable site and, where appropriate, a candidate UDZ, is a plan-led process which includes a key decision making role for the planning authority and provides up-front certainty for both communities and the development sector, with potential for post-UDZ designation fast-track planning arrangements where development proposals are submitted in accordance with an approved scheme.

Sites that have been designated as a UDZ are intended to be a focus for large scale State investment in infrastructure, to support the delivery of housing and other development at scale.

Q4. Will this affect the operation of existing strategic development zones (SDZs)?

No. Strategic Development Zones are long term strategic development designations which are identified by Statutory Instrument under Part IX of the Planning and Development Act 2000, which will be continued by Part 21 of the Planning and Development Act 2024. While



similar to SDZs in ensuring comprehensive redevelopment of large-scale strategic sites, UDZs are envisaged to provide a greater degree of flexibility to a local authority regarding the need to progress a detailed development scheme for all or part of a UDZ in connection with the initial 'planning framework' that forms part of the development plan, with the ability to prepare the detailed 'development scheme' at a later stage for all or part of the area if necessary. The candidate UDZ and UDZ provisions also include a focus on identification of the key infrastructural needs of the area from the outset, through the identification of 'critical land' needed for infrastructure.

Q5. What is the role of the Land Development Agency (LDA) and Regional Assemblies in this process?

Due to the large-scale strategic nature of the type of lands that may be suitable for consideration as a candidate UDZ, it is likely that stakeholders such as the LDA and the Regional Assembly will have engaged with the relevant local authority regarding lands which may have the potential for regeneration or development at scale. It is envisaged that the LDA or Regional Assembly would assist and support the local authority regarding identification of suitable sites.

Q6. What is a candidate UDZ and how does it differ from a UDZ?

During the process of identifying suitable sites, the adoption of a planning framework by way of a variation to a development plan and the making of a detailed development scheme, the land is referred to as a candidate UDZ. Upon completion of those statutory processes, the Minister may recommend designation of the candidate UDZ as an Urban Development Zone to the Government.