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Outline of the proposed Planning and Development Bill

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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Executive Summary

Ireland's planning system has served it well for many years, providing a robust framework for planning and development, whilst also enabling public participation in decision-making. More than 30,000 planning applications pass smoothly through the planning system per year.

Yet the landscape in which planning occurs has changed over the past two decades since the current legislative framework, the Planning and Development Act 2000, was enacted. EU, environmental and national law has changed. Planning law is more complex, as is the nature of plans themselves. Different strategic infrastructure needs, such as renewable energy infrastructure, exist than did at the turn of the 21st century. An Bord Pleanála, Ireland's highest decision-making body, requires the appropriate organisational structure to meet Ireland's modern planning needs.

It was in this context that Housing for All, the Government's housing plan to 2030, committed to a review of the planning system. That review, led by the Office of the Attorney General over the past fifteen months, has served as both a legal fitness check and a timely future-proofing exercise to ensure we have robust planning legislation in place to meet the country's needs over the coming decades. The most comprehensive review of planning legislation since 2000 will result in planning legislation aligning with policy and being more legally accessible and streamlined.

Among the main provisions in the Bill will be:

- **Strengthened legal status for Ministerial guidelines:** Ministerial guidelines and policy directives will be upgraded to 'National Planning Policy Statements' and 'National Planning Policy Guidance'. These will be approved by Government. Alignment of other planning documents with these will be mandatory.
- **Amended focus and lifespan of Local Development Plans:** these will be extended from six years to ten years, with a review after Year 5. Plans will be more strategic in nature. They will give a strong sense of what is being planned for particularly areas before any planning applications emerge. This will help ensure that public engagement and major local debate is focused on the plan-making rather than planning application stage. Local Area Plans will be replaced by specific types of area-based plans to meet particular needs (Urban Area Plans; Priority Area Plans; Joint Area Plans; Strategic Development Zones/Urban Development Zones).
- **Statutory mandatory timelines for all consent processes, including An Bord Pleanála (ABP) decisions, to bring certainty to the planning consent process:** timelines are being introduced for appeals and consents applications made to ABP (including Strategic Infrastructure Developments).

Where ABP fails to make decisions with these timelines, it will be subject to fines. The exact timelines will be included in the finalised Bill. It is intended that the timelines for ABP will be introduced on a phased basis, starting with those for Strategic Infrastructure Developments (including energy projects).

- **Changes to Judicial Reviews (JRs) of planning decisions:** there will be timelines for various steps in the Judicial Review process. ABP will be able to correct an error of fact or law in a planning decision and will be able to apply for a stay on the determination of JR proceedings whilst making such corrections. The Bill will bring clarity to the role of different parties in accessing justice. In the case of applications for JRs by an organisation, these will have to be taken by an individual or individuals.
- **A re-structuring of An Bord Pleanála:** the agency will be re-named An Coimisiún Pleanála and its decision-making and governance structures separated. It will consist of Planning Commissioners (consisting of a Chief Planning Commissioner and up to 14 full-time Planning Commissioners), who will replace the Chairperson and Board Member roles. A new Governing Executive (led by a Chief Executive) will be responsible for the organisation's governance and organisation.

The draft Planning and Development Bill 2022, when enacted, will bring greater clarity, consistency and certainty to how planning decisions are made. It will make the planning system more coherent and user-friendly for the public and planning practitioners. Public participation, which is a hallmark of the current planning system, will remain a central component. These changes will enable appropriate development to be planned and executed with a degree of confidence and certainty about how and when a planning consent decision will be made. Where infrastructure such as housing is needed and is appropriate, it will happen with greater certainty and speed. These changes will provide greater policy certainty about the framework in which planning decisions are made.

It is intended that from a policy perspective, this review will result in:

- debate on the scale of housing requirements (in line with objectives of compact urban growth and environmental sustainability) happening at the plan-making rather than planning application stage. It will facilitate greater clarity and long-term visibility of planning outcomes.
- adequate account is taken of the needs of the future population of new and expanded communities, as well as the needs of existing communities; and
- appropriate account is taken of the nature of planning decisions, which require careful balancing of public policy, public participation and environmental issues.

The Draft Planning and Development Bill will be published in January and progress to pre-legislative scrutiny and enactment in early 2023.

Introduction

Background

Planning operates in an ever-changing policy, institutional and regulatory framework which reflects the continually evolving nature of public administration and governance, the planning system and society in Ireland. Ireland is fortunate to have a planning system which enables considerable public participation, but needs to build on that to ensure that our planning legislation is fit for the modern era. More than 30,000 planning applications are processed smoothly through the planning system every year, but the landscape in which planning operates has understandably changed over the past two decades. We now rightly give greater priority to environmental considerations and must also meet our future needs in terms of strategic infrastructure in critical areas such as housing and renewable energy. The Review has served as both a legal fitness check and a timely future proofing exercise to ensure we have robust planning legislation in place to meet the country's needs over the coming decades.

The Planning and Development Act passed in 2000 has been amended many times, and as a result, can be somewhat impenetrable for the public and practitioners alike. This Review and the New Bill it has produced represents the most comprehensive review of planning since the Act was first drafted. Its key aim, is to ensure that the provisions align with policy and are more accessible and streamlined from a legal perspective.

Conduct of the Review

The Review and Consolidation of the Planning and Development Act 2000 is one of the actions contained within **Housing for All**. The review led by the Attorney General and launched in late Summer 2021, has involved extensive work by his Working Group, with engagement from the Department in terms of policy aspects and the feedback from stakeholder engagement.

The key aim of the review is to put plan-making at the centre of the planning system by bringing increased clarity and streamlining to planning legislation and improving the functioning of the planning system for both practitioners and the general public. Public participation, which is a hallmark of the current planning system, will remain a central component of the planning system in the updated legislation.

There are a number of key principles that have guided this review:-

- Avoidance of unnecessary change;
- Increased clarity and streamlining of the legislation;
- Chronological format for processes with clear signposts to other sections or legislation;
- Improve coherence and usability of procedures;
- Completeness of transposition of EU Directives;
- Adherence to constitutional requirements; and
- Respect for the role of the public.

The overarching goals for the review from a policy perspective were informed by the commitment in Housing for All to undertake a comprehensive review and consolidation of planning legislation as part of a number of objectives with the aim of improving the functioning of the planning system, and in particular to ensure that:-

- the major debate, particularly on the scale of housing requirements to meet needs, in line with objectives of compact urban growth and environmental sustainability, is focused on the plan-making rather than the planning application stage, to facilitate greater clarity and long-term visibility in planning outcomes;
- adequate account is taken of the needs of the future population of new and expanded communities, as well as the needs of existing communities; and
- appropriate account is taken of the nature of planning decisions, which require careful balancing of public policy, public participation and environmental issues.

Next Steps

The culmination of this Review is a New Bill, agreed by Government on 13 December 2022. The modality of this review was designed to deliver the Bill attached without a General Scheme in order to expedite the delivery of an updated Planning and Development Act in early 2023. The Bill will be published in early January, following a briefing of the Planning Advisory Forum and then will be provided to the Oireachtas for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The reforms will also require significant transitional measures and further amendments may also be required to facilitate these measures. It will also be necessary to update and revise secondary legislation and guidance, as well as training of planning practitioners, and the resourcing the planning system to meet the new tasks. This is reflected as a specific action in the update of Housing for All.

Benefits of the new Planning and Development Bill

The key benefits of the new Bill are **Clarity, Consistency and Certainty**. The Bill brings increased clarity and streamlining the legislation and the improved coherence and usability for the public and practitioners. This has been achieved by removal of duplication, improving processes and reorganisation of layout and signposting to reflect the typical pathways that users of the Planning Act utilise. Thus the Bill will be clearer to use for both practitioners and the public, highlighting the important points of engagement for the public.

The structures of planning have also been reviewed to ensure alignment and consistency, both with our European and environmental obligations and in relation to the various tiers of national, regional and local plan-making. Finally, and importantly, users of the planning system will benefit from greater certainty through the introduction of a range of statutory and mandatory timelines across the various consenting processes.

An outline of the key themes of the Bill with a summary of the provisions, is set out in pages 7-19.

Engagement with Stakeholders

The Department has undertaken significant engagement as part of the review.

A Planning Advisory Forum, a key commitment in Housing for All, was established in 2021. The Forum played a very important role in contributing to the emerging policy considerations of the Review, as did a number of further stakeholder engagement mechanisms, including an Inter-Departmental Group and a Standing Group consisting of An Bord Pleanála, the Office of the Planning Regulator, the County and City Management Association and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Forum has met six times since it was established and is due to meet again early next year. The Forum consists of a wide stakeholder membership with representatives from a broad range of sectors, including representation from the public sector, business, environmental, social and knowledge based sectors. The Forum has considered and made submissions on each of the major emerging themes of the Review, including Plans and Guidelines, Development Consents, Enforcement, Environmental Assessment and Judicial Review among others.

The Department has also engaged with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage on four occasions on various thematic issues, and this has allowed for valuable input from members on the emerging matters. It is intended that the new Bill will undergo pre-legislative scrutiny after publication.

Purpose of the Bill

Taking account of the various engagements and the policy considerations set out in Housing for All, it was considered important the purpose of the Bill be clearly outlined. Therefore the following provisions are proposed:

The purpose of this Bill is to :

- (a) Provide the legislative framework for the proper spatial planning and sustainable development of the State, to operate at national, regional and local levels;
- (b) Ensure that the planning system functions to support and regulate the development of land and infrastructure, enhance assets and amenities and preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment;
- (c) Make clear provision for national planning policy, measures and guidance in the form of the National Planning Framework and National Planning Statements;
- (d) Provide for a plan led system of planning and development based on an integrated hierarchy of plan-making consisting of :-
 - (i) A National Planning Framework
 - (ii) Three regional assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
 - (iii) Thirty-one local authority Development Plans
 - (iv) Area Plans as mandated or required by local planning authorities
- (e) Support the development of a co-ordinated and integrated Marine Planning system;
- (f) Integrate the pursuit of the national climate objective with the plan-led development of the State;
- (g) Ensure that there is transparent and timely decision-making within the framework of policy and plans set out in this Bill;
- (h) Facilitate consistency and quality in decision-making that is proportionate and sound;
- (i) Incorporate public participation in plan-making and decision-making processes;
- (j) Ensure that, in the making of statutory plans and consent decisions under this Bill, there is a balance between the social, economic and environmental considerations of sustainable development in the interests of the common good;

- (k) Clarify the role of the Minister and planning bodies in the planning process:-
 - (i) The role of the Minister is to formulate national planning policy and to oversee the functioning of the planning system;
 - (ii) The role of regional assemblies is to formulate regional planning and related economic policy in alignment with the national policy
 - (iii) The role of planning authorities is to give effect at a local level to national and regional policy and to set a framework for the future sustainable development of its administrative area
- (l) Clarify that the Planning Commission is an independent body that determines appeals on planning consents and applications for strategic and other developments, including those in the maritime area;
- (m) Clarify that the Office of the Planning Regulator is an independent body that ensures planning authorities and the Planning Commission implement and support national planning policy as well as undertaking research, training and public awareness to promote public engagement in the planning process; and
- (n) Reflect that the aim of the Act is to serve to enhance economic prosperity, quality of life, social cohesion and environmental standards for the benefit of present and future generations.

Thereafter, the Bill sets out, in a chronological format, the processes of plan-making, consents, enforcement and the roles of various planning bodies, including An Bord Pleanála and the Office of the Planning Regulator.

Plans and Policy

This Section of the New Bill sets out the approach to plans at national, regional and local level and also includes the new concept of national planning statements which will replace what are currently known as Ministerial Guidelines (under Section 28 of the current Act).



National Planning Statements

Currently section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended provides for the issuance of policy guidance, to which planning authorities must have regard. Provision is also included in this section for the making of specific planning policy requirements with which the planning authority must comply. Section 29 of the current Act provides for Ministerial policy directives with which the planning authority/An Bord Pleanála must comply.

Under the new Bill, these Ministerial guidelines and policy directives will be updated to form National Planning Statements, which will comprise two parts,

- 1) National Planning Policies and Measures, and
- 2) National Planning Policy Guidance.

National Planning Statements will be approved by Government and alignment with the Policies and Measures will be mandatory, in that there will be a requirement for other plans to be materially consistent with them, whereas the associated Policy Guidance will outline how these policies may be implemented. This will bring greater clarity and consistency to where national policy and guidance interacts with the planning system.

National Planning Framework

The publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF) as part of Project Ireland 2040, underscored the importance of the strategic plan led approach, and importantly in combination with the National Development Plan was innovative in ensuring the alignment of strategic planning and investment priorities. This completely aligns with the OECD view that investment should not be “spatially blind”.

The NPF now sits at the top of the hierarchy of plans, with Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) now in place for the three regions since January 2020, and an ongoing process of review or variation of the City and County Development Plans to ensure that they are aligned with the NPF and RSESs. The NPF will continue to have a 20-year cycle, with opportunity for periodic review every five years now tied into census cycles.

The current NPF is scheduled for review by 2024. Work is now commencing on this process, informed by the outcome of Census 2022.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies

Current legislation provides for the development and adoption of three statutory Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) to provide the regional expression of national planning policy and set strategic policy requirements for city and county development plans. Under the new Bill, this now includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for each of the five cities in Ireland, embedded within the three RSES. Regional Assemblies will adopt RSES with a 10 – 20 year timeline, with the Strategy to commence reviewed within 6 months of any NPF review and update.

Local Development Plans

Local authority Development Plans are the critical local expression of the future development of a city or county, reflecting national and regional perspectives, and provide for more granular information of the social and economic development of the particular area. Under the new Bill, the duration of such plans will be extended to a 10-year cycle, with a review after year 5 and a greater focus on strategies that comprise spatial planning framework for decision making.

A strong view emanating from stakeholder engagement was on the need for such plans to be more concise and focused, to enable strong public engagement at the earliest stage and real sense of what was being planned for an area, before any applications for consent emerge.

The New Bill sets out that the preparation of a new development plan shall be strategic in nature for the purposes of enabling a planning authority to develop—

- (a) an integrated overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area to which the development plan relates,
- (b) policies and objectives that are necessary for the purposes of such a strategy,
- (c) the strategies that are to be prepared in relation to
 - sustainable development and regeneration;
 - economic development;
 - housing delivery, with a separate strategy for housing delivery in cities;
 - places of high quality and sustainable communities;
 - environmental and climate change;
 - conservation of natural and built heritage; and
 - control of areas use and structures.
- (d) any settlement-specific objectives that the planning authority is required to prepare where there are settlements (not being a city) with a population of over 1,500, or less than this where there is the capacity to accommodate significant population growth.

At the midway point of implementation of the Development Plan, Local Authorities will be required to prepare an 'Interim Report on Implementation' which will take account of any changes to national policies in the intervening years since the publication of the plan and if necessary propose variations to ensure consistency across the tiers of planning.

Variations may also be proposed to progress the implementation of the overall strategy for proper planning and sustainable development based on performance over the first five years and if required make further additions or deletions of zoned land to accommodate growth.

Area Based Plans

With a greater focus on granularity in Development Plans, the automatic need based on population size to prepare subsidiary plans - Local Area Plans - will be replaced by specific types of area based plans to meet particular needs–

- Urban Area Plans – for towns designated as “regional growth centres” or “key” towns in the RSES;
- Priority Area Plans – for a sub-part of an urban area;
- Joint Area Plans – for whole/part of an urban area that is in the administrative area of more than one local authority; and
- Planning Schemes related to Strategic Development Zones (and Urban Development Zones)¹.

Lower order plans will be required to be aligned to higher order plans, with Development Plans materially consistent with the NPF, National Planning Policies and Measures and RSES,s and in turn, the Area Based Plans consistent with Development Plans.

Specific provision is made for an expedited process to facilitate the alignment of plans with new national planning statements.

Role of the Office of the Planning Regulator

This section of the Bill also sets out the role of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) in reviewing RSEs, development plans and area based plans and variations to such plans. The Bill empowers the OPR to issue a draft direction in respect of all such plans, with the Minister empowered to determine whether to issue a final direction.

¹ Urban Development Zones provisions are reflected in a separate Bill also reflecting new provisions on land value sharing and ultimately it is intended these will form part of the new Planning and Development legislative code.

Consents

Under the Bill, there will be a clearer distinction between different categories of consents

- Standard Planning Application
- Applications made directly to the Board
- Alterations, extensions and revocations of permissions
- Local authority and State authority development

Statutory mandatory timelines will be introduced for all consent processes, including An Bord Pleanála, to bring certainty to the planning consent process. For An Bord Pleanála processes, timelines are being introduced for appeals as well as the various consents applications made directly to the Board, including Strategic Infrastructure Developments.

The Department is continuing to work with An Bord Pleanála to finalise the exact timelines and these will be included in the finalised Bill. It is intended that the timelines for An Bord Pleanála will be introduced on a phased basis, starting with those for Strategic Infrastructure Developments, including energy projects. The Board will have to adhere to these timelines, and where they fail to meet them, they will be subject to fines and will also have to publish details on their website and in the Annual Report.

The ability of local authorities or An Bord Pleanála to make decisions that materially contravene a development plan will be limited.

While provision for Outline Planning Permission will remain in the new Bill it will be limited to developments of four or less housing units, including for one-off houses.

Supporting Aspects

Judicial Review

Some changes are proposed to the Judicial Review provisions which should be seen in the context of the wider review and the key aim of moving to a plan led system and ensuring a greater consistency of approach with regard to national planning policy including providing for limited grounds for material contravention in planning decisions by An Bord Pleanála.

Process Changes

These changes involves

- Timelines have been included for the various steps in the Judicial Review process including for pleadings, hearing of cases and delivery of judgements by the court.
- An Bord Pleanála or the local authority, as appropriate, will be able to correct an error of fact or law in its planning decision and can also apply for a stay on the determination of Judicial Review proceedings while doing so.
- Taking account of the Aarhus provisions, clarity is brought to the role of different parties in accessing justice, and the provisions regarding standing will be updated.
- The provisions require an applicant for Judicial Review:
 - a) To have sufficient interest
 - (i) this can be satisfied by being directly or indirectly materially affected by the matters to which the application relates;
 - b) Sufficient interest is not limited to an interest in land or a financial interest;
 - c) Where the Judicial Review relates to a decision on a development requiring EIA or AA, an NGO or an association will be regarded as having a sufficient interest if:
 - (i) it has a legal personality by being incorporated as a company;
 - (ii) its constitution has as an object protection of the environment and it has pursued such objects for at least one year;
 - (iii) the company has no fewer than 10 members;
 - (iv) the company has passed a resolution authorising the bringing of the JR proceedings.

- d) An NGO or association meeting the requirements at c) above shall have sufficient interest in any ground that relates to matters raised by it before the decision maker.
- Residents Associations can still take Judicial Review proceedings but to do so they must comply with these requirements. If they do not comply, the individual residents can sue either individually or collectively as the provisions in the draft Bill do not prevent this.

Costs

There is a provision for costs protection for judicial review cases, providing that there will not be any order for costs in any such proceedings unless the Court considers that the proceedings are frivolous or vexatious or an abuse of process. This reflects the recent Supreme Court ruling in the Heather Hill case which found that all of the grounds in the proceedings challenging the validity of decisions to grant development consent should benefit from costs protection.

A provision will be made in the Bill to bring forward an administrative scheme to deal with costs associated with initiating any proceedings relating to non-compliance with national law relating to the environment.

The precise form of the scheme will be finalised over the coming months but it will be regulated by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications or a body authorised to do so on his behalf, with the agreement of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Minister for Justice and with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Environmental Assessment

In Ireland, the aims of Environmental Assessment are achieved using three key tools:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)²
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)³
- Appropriate Assessment (AA) pursuant to the Habitats Directive⁴

As noted by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) in its Planning Leaflet 11 on Environmental Assessment:

² Directive 2001/42/EC (known as 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' – SEA Direct

³ Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (known as 'Environmental Impact Assessment' – EIA Directive)

⁴ Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (known as the 'Habitats Directive')

“These assessments, along with other environmental requirements including water, air quality and waste management are intended to ensure that proper planning and development is based on the principles of sustainable development”.

Each tool has a specific purpose and function and each relate to different phases of the plan making and consent process.

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), undertaken at the policy level when plans (development plans, local area plans, etc.) are being developed;
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), undertaken at the project assessment (planning application/consent) stage; and
- Appropriate Assessment (AA), considered at both plan and project stages.

The new Bill brings increased clarity on the integration of the scope and role of environmental assessments into plan making functions and the consenting process. The provisions, including in relation to timelines, are aligned with the relevant EU Directives whilst endeavouring not to be unnecessarily complex through overly-intricate national provisions.

It reflects the wording and intent of relevant EU Environmental Directives and the Appropriate Assessment process (particularly AA in enforcement cases and processes for projects of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest) has been reviewed to better reflect the intent of the Habitats Directive.

Enforcement

Local authorities are responsible for enforcement related to breaches of planning legislation and are required to take action in respect of unauthorised development. Unauthorised development is any development that requires planning permission and does not have that permission or a development which is in breach of the conditions of its planning permission.

Under the new Bill, enforcement will be enhanced through provision of to introduce a new regional structure, on a shared service basis across local authorities, for the enforcement of activities, such as quarries.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

There will be increased capacity for local authorities to utilise Compulsory Purchase Orders in pursuance of their functions, this will include clarity on provisions to allow local authorities to acquire vacant or derelict properties for onward sale, for example to develop for residential use. This will support Government the Town Centre First initiative.

Architectural Heritage

Provisions have been included to allow planning authorities to sanction works for the purpose of enabling a residential use of a protected structure, where the works are necessary and proportionate whilst not materially affecting the character of the structure. This is to support Government initiatives relating to vacancy such as Croí Cónaithe and Town Centre First.

Planning Bodies

An Bord Pleanála

An Bord Pleanála is a critical organisation in the planning hierarchy within Ireland, standing at the apex of our planning system, it plays a crucial role as a final arbiter of many planning applications. It is quite unique in an international context, providing both independent appellate functions, and decision-making on projects of scale and strategic importance, with the opportunities for wide engagement in this process. It is vital that there is confidence in the integrity and impartiality of this process.

In October, 2022, the Minister published an Action Plan for An Bord Pleanála, taking account of the first phase of the review by the Office of the Planning Regulator into certain systems and procedures used by An Bord Pleanála. The purpose of this Action Plan is to underpin confidence in the capacity of An Bord Pleanála to make planning decisions in a fair manner, supporting the values of independence, impartiality and integrity. This signalled in particular the need to move to a new organisational structure for An Bord Pleanála to separate the decision-making and corporate/organisational roles.

An Bord Pleanála will be re-named as **An Coimisiún Pleanála** to bring greater clarity to the understanding of these distinct roles. The new Bill contains a number of provisions reflecting this new organisational structure and will clearly outline the role of

- Planning Commissioners – who will be responsible for all decision making regarding consents and applications made to it under the new Bill. There will be Chief Planning Commissioner and up to 14 Planning Commissioners. These will be full-time posts and will replace the current Chairperson and Board Member roles.
- The Governing Executive - which will be responsible for the governance and organisation of the body and will comprise a Chief Executive, up to two additional ex-officio members and up to 4 non-executive members.

A number of further measures recommended in the initial review by the Office of Planning Regulator, such as outlining the decision-making process are reflected in the Bill and any other further matters, with a legislative requirement, raised in the 2nd phase of their report will be taken into consideration.

Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established in April 2019. The OPR's creation flows directly from the recommendations of the Mahon Tribunal, adding to a range of reform of planning, local government and ethics legislation to address the Tribunal's finding. The OPR's role is threefold:

- oversee consistent implementation of Government planning policy and legislation by planning authorities;
- ensure the effectiveness of the systems and procedures used by planning authorities in the delivery of planning services for and on behalf of the public; and
- to implement research, training, and public awareness programmes to ensure public engagement in the process.

There are clarifications are included in the Bill to many of the processes of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), but these fundamental functions will not alter, save that the OPR will be given additional powers to investigate complaints of a systemic nature relating to An Bord Pleanála.

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Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage



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