



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

Housing Ireland - Planning Reform and Residential Development

Paul Hogan, Assistant Secretary, 20th March 2025



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1. Context

2. National Planning Framework

3. Planning Act 2024

“Decades in the making, Europe’s housing crisis is being felt from the Netherlands to Portugal, Greece to Germany, and in Britain. Prices and rents have soared, **availability and affordability** have plunged and housing has become a political issue.”

The Guardian, 6th May 2024

Comparative Housing
Market Affordability
2023

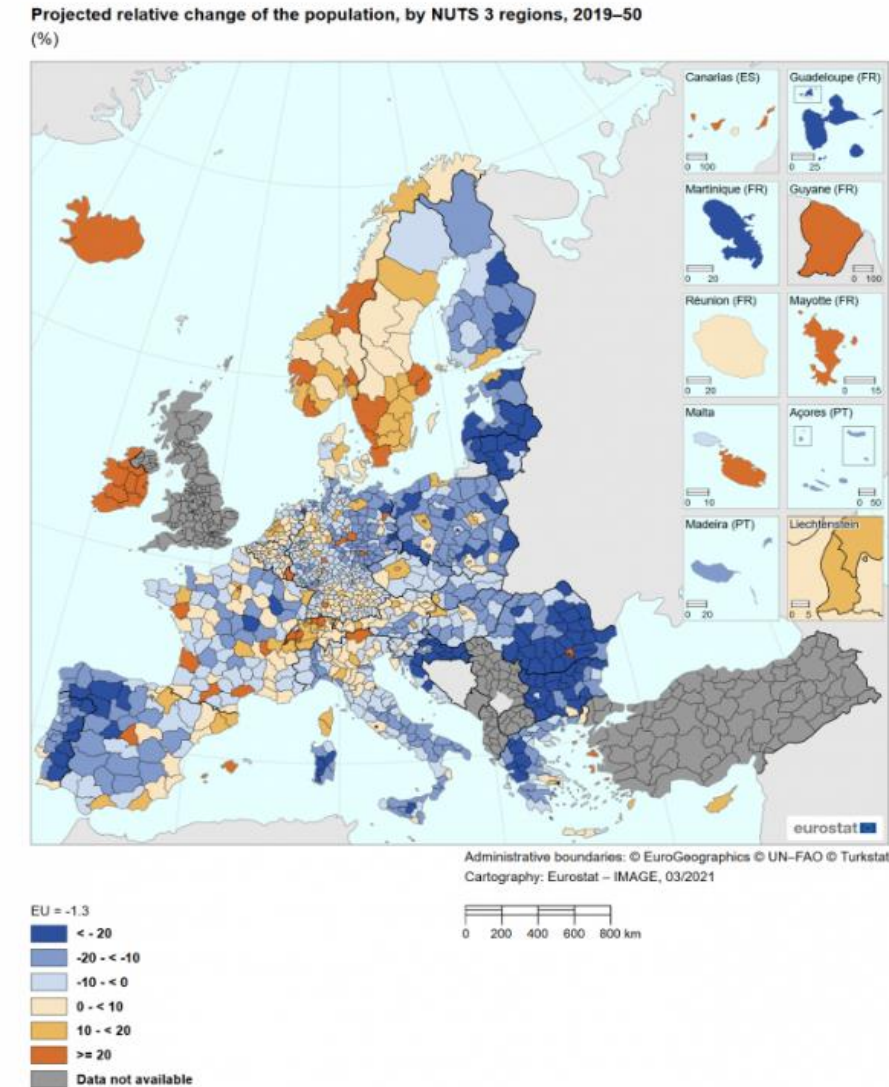
*Demographia International Housing
Report 2024*

| Country / Jurisdiction | Housing Median Multiple |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hong Kong | 16.7 |
| New Zealand | 8.2 |
| Australia | 9.7 |
| Canada | 5.6 |
| U.K. | 5.3 |
| U.S. | 4.8 |
| Ireland | 4.8 |
| Singapore | 3.8 |

Ireland's Population Growth



- Historically highly **cyclical**, but overall growth trajectory, c5.4m 2025
- Continued population **growth** projections to 2050 (EUROSTAT)
- Driven by Ireland's **attractiveness** and opportunity – climate, economy, society
- Capacity constraints – **housing** & infrastructure



Average c50,000 homes each year



Galway City

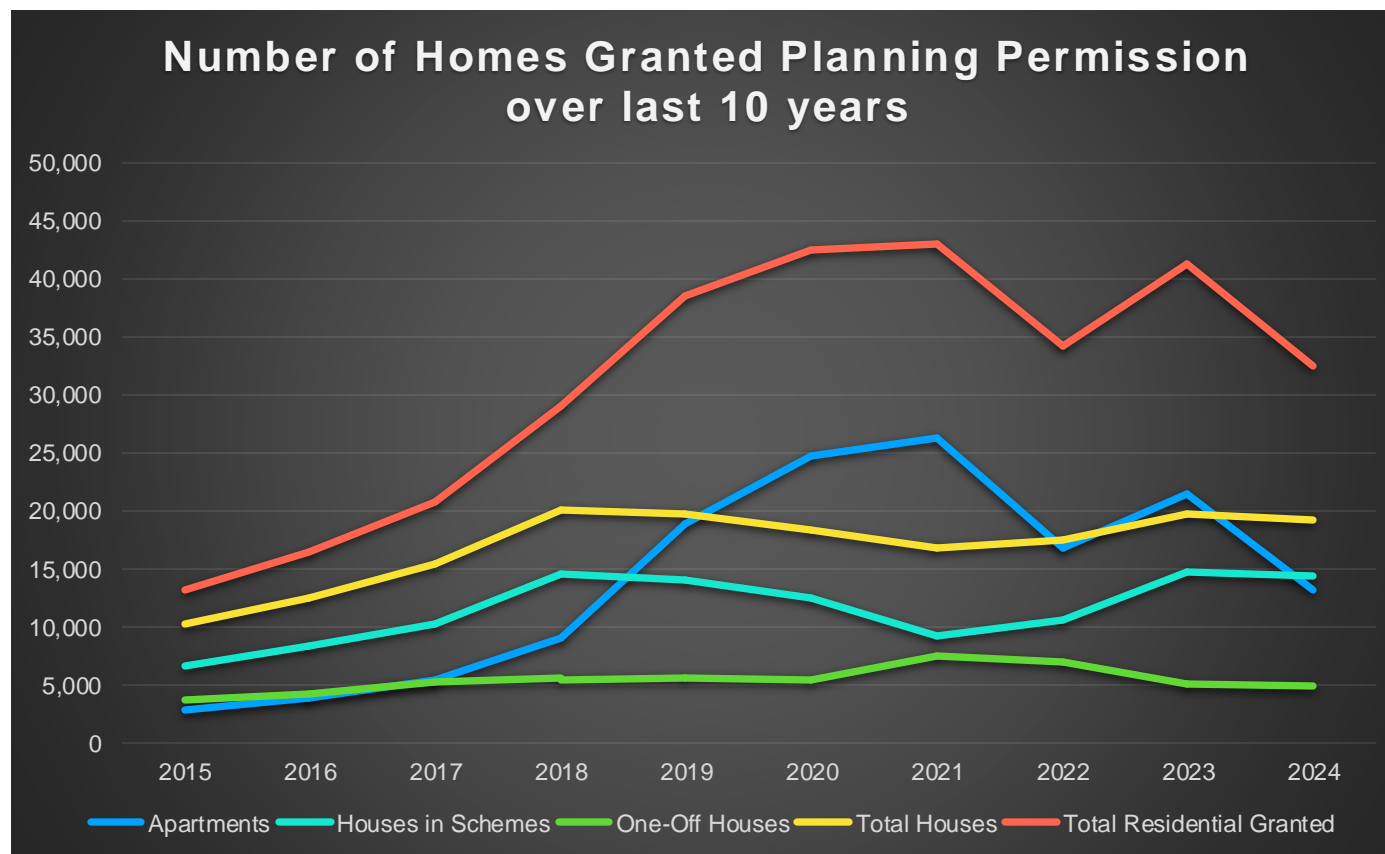


Drogheda

Planning System Housing Output



- Permission for **38,600** new homes each year since 2019 (average)
- 50% more homes *permitted* than have been completed since 2019
- **Apartment** permissions critical to numbers



‘Step-Up’ will Require



- More applications within a more **robust and resourced** planning system, with more **predictable** timelines and outcomes
- A bigger planned housing requirement, that includes more **zoned land**, as well as delivery on ‘**brownfield**’ sites and addressing **vacancy**
- Prioritised investment in **servicing** land - infrastructure and facilities
- Capacity *and* mechanisms to deliver housing, at **pace and scale**
- Finance and **investment**, both private and public

Planning Priorities for 2025



- Policy Revision: Updated NPF & Housing Requirement
- Legislative Reform: 2024 Act Commencement
- Enabling the System: Resourcing and new 'SHAO'
- Institutional Reform: An Coimisiún Pleanála
- System Improvement: Performance and Innovation

NPF - High Level Strategy Revision



- **Strategy** aims to shift to more regionally balanced and compact growth, with focus on key drivers (2018)
- Aligned with **€167bn NDP** for infrastructural investment to 2030
- Informs **policy and investment** across Government and at local level



NPF Revision Process



- Government decision to review, expert advisory group, 2023
- ESRI updated population and housing projections (c50,000 new homes p.a.), June 2024
- Public consultation July-September 2024, 272 submissions
- Approval to proceed with amended Draft, November 2024
- Final approval by Government and Oireachtas imminent

Key Issues



- Balanced Regional Development
- Climate Change Response
- Population, Housing and Land
- Infrastructural Investment and Delivery
- Compact Growth and Viability



Application to the Planning System



- Post-NPF adoption, ministerial requirement (s28) to ‘open-up’ County Development Plans, by way of variation (s13)
- All Plans will have bigger housing requirement, initially for remainder of current plan duration
- Will also need to look at 10 year plans further to Planning Act
- Will effectively mean planning for more (>80,000) new homes per annum, over a longer time horizon

Planning and Development Act 2024

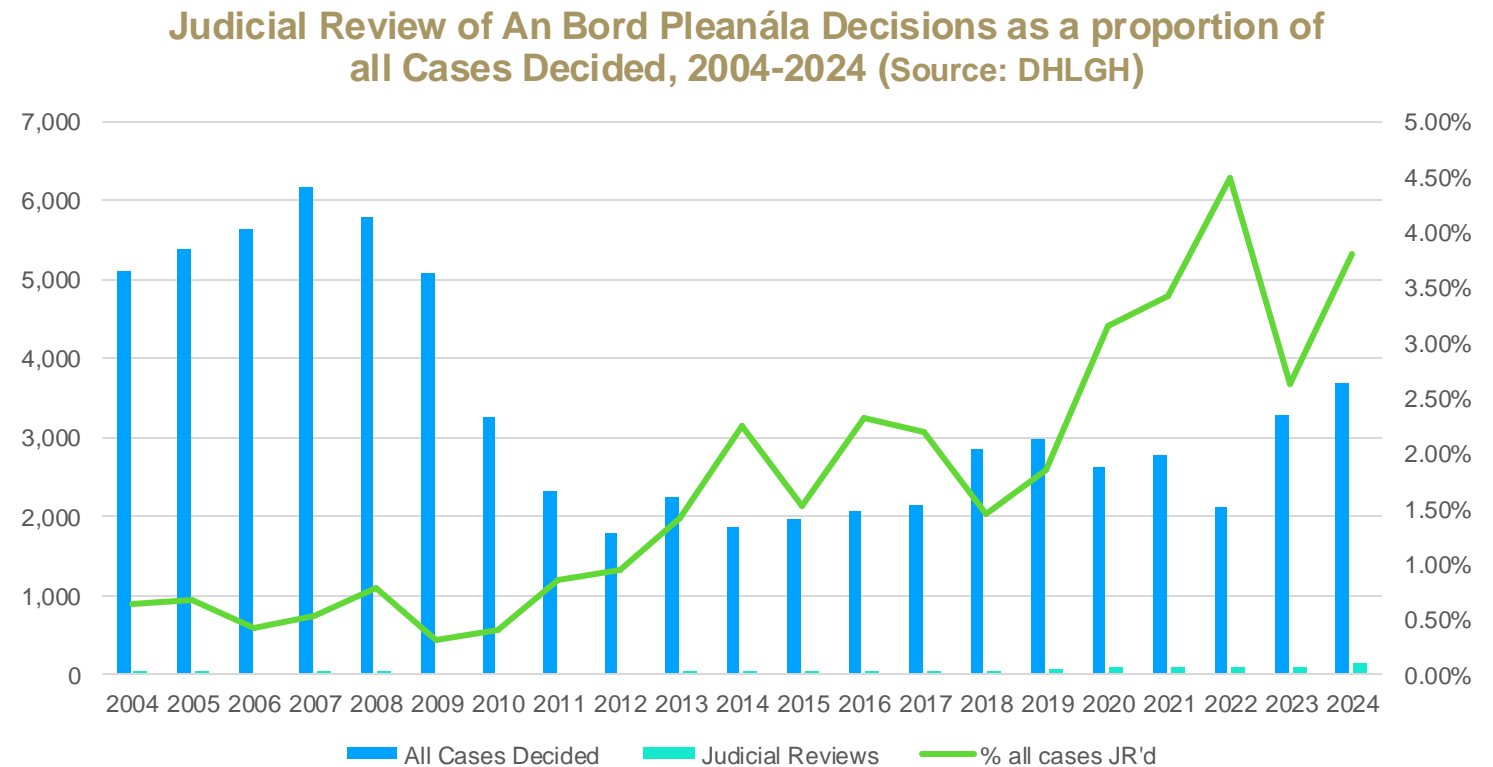


- 2000 Planning Act unrecognisable from original - has trebled in length
- Revision overdue - more logical, hierarchical and streamlined sequence, integrated international and EU Directive-related provisions
- Court judgements/case-law - key elements of the code not fit to withstand legal scrutiny applied in recent years
- Widespread recognition - Government of Ireland; International bodies, including EU, OECD, IMF; also ESRI, NCPC, FAC etc.

Impact on Planning System



- Complexity/uncertainty
- 'Productivity Paradox'
- Chilling effect of Risk
- Open, accessible but
- Need for balance...



Planning and Development Act 2024



Signed by President 17 October 2024, after >3 year process – only second consolidation of Irish planning legislation in 61 years

Intention of the Oireachtas re. clarity, consistency and certainty:

- 1) Planning system that provides policy clarity from the outset of the process, in a consistent manner and that is enabled to make timely decisions;
- 2) That operates to balance the common good with the rights of others

Key Measures 1 - Policy Hierarchy



- National Planning Statements will replace s28 guidelines - to set mandatory 'big-picture' priorities (policies and measures), with local flexibility to give effect (guidance)
- More strategic, 10 year development plans, more time to complete, mid-term review
- Mechanisms to quickly align national & local policy, vary plans, where warranted
- Local Plans for specific purposes - urban, priority and co-ordinated, but not for zoning land - only through the development plan or variation process
- Intention is policy clarity and consistency: "materially consistent with"

Key Measures 2 - Judicial Review



- Retains 'section 50B' (2011) rules while enabling a 'scale of fees'
- Winning applicants costs from respondent in line with scale of fees, losing cost contribution from 'ELCFAM', to be regulated by secondary legislation
- Also removes initial leave stage of process, limits new pleadings, clarifies standing rights of organisations and enables suspension of permission
- In combination with other measures, intention is to ensure access to justice that is NPE while facilitating greater certainty and efficiency

Key Measures 3 - An Coimisiún Pleanála

- Restructuring of An Bord Pleanála with the Chair to become CEO
- Mandatory statutory time limits for all decision-making processes
- Independent decision-making function to be separated from the corporate governance role - Planning Commissioners, new Chief PC
- New Governing Board will oversee performance, building on resourcing
- Intention is to enable prioritisation, robust and timely decision-making

Some Housing-Related Aspects



- Obligation to prepare a ‘**Housing Development Strategy**’ as a key part of each County Development Plan – population, settlement
- ‘**Part V**’ social and affordable housing and housing strategy measures retained
- ‘**UDZs**’ will replace SDZs (existing SDZs will remain) - Local authorities may nominate candidate UDZs, Government will designate
- **Extension of duration** (s42) measures retained for 3 years

Implementation



- Implementation Strategy now approved, centred on a programme of Secondary Legislation to give effect to commencements
- To be rolled out mainly by year end 2025, important to note each aspect of 2000 Act remains until repealed
- Oversight group and sectoral/thematic working groups, comprising those who operate the planning system
- At outset of the updated Part 4 Regulations, undertaking public consultation on review of exemptions and EIA screening thresholds

4 Blocks of Commencement



- First Block includes procedural and transitional order, Parts 16 (events and funfairs), 17 (ACP) and initial elements of Part 9 (JR)
- ABP transition to An Coimisiún Pleanála early Q2 2025 – Backlog now eliminated to facilitate
- Second Block will address plans and guidelines, as well as OPR, Q2 2025
- Third Block will primarily relate to consents, targeting Q4 2025
- Fourth Block all other Parts, including JR cost provisions

What Success Looks Like



- A streamlined planning system, with more predictable decision-making timelines and outcomes, that is adequately resourced, with continuous improvement
- More agile, efficient policy alignment that can balance all interests, including environmental protection, to ultimately deliver *sustainable* development
- Enhanced capacity to prioritise strategic investment, in terms of housing, renewables and infrastructure
- Retaining an open, transparent and participative planning system
- Rather than a ‘decision-led’ system, a greater ‘plan-led’ emphasis on outcomes



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Thank You

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