

IRISH PLANNING INSTITUTE

Press Release

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PLANNING BILL AMENDMENTS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY SAY PLANNERS

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill now before the Oireachtas represents a “missed opportunity” according to the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) which represents the country’s professional planners.

The Institute has warned that, notwithstanding proposals in the Bill, problems may still remain in relation to Development Plans not being fully consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines as the Bill fails to give a greater role to the public in regards to Development Plans as suggested previously by the IPI.

While generally welcoming many of the proposed amendments, which stretch to 100 pages, IPI President, Mr Gordon Daly stated: “The existing system is that submissions on a draft Plan are considered by the same people who prepared the Plan. There is, at the very least, the perception on the part of the person making the submission that their concerns are not being considered as they would if it were an independent appeals process – similar to the system for planning applications.”

The IPI says it would be appropriate that an independent body, such as An Bord Pleanala, would have a role in advising the Minister on any matters raised while leaving the final decision to the Minister. While the Bill provides for general Ministerial interventions in cases where Development Plans are not consistent with national or regional policy, this is solely at the Minister’s initiative, and there is no direct role for the public in this process.

The Institute, however, stresses that it is not advocating a lengthy and all-encompassing inquiry process on Development Plan as exists in some other countries but, instead, a “limited right of appeal”, within a specified time period after the making of a Development Plan only in terms of its consistency with the National Spatial Strategy, Regional Planning Guidelines or Development Plans as appropriate, rather than localised issues.

“It is suggested that the need for such Ministerial intervention would be lessened, and the credibility of the entire plan-making process would be enhanced, by providing a limited right of appeal to the public. There is no question of trying to diminish the important role of the elected members – it’s simply that a policy decision taken can have far reaching consequences for the growth and development of an area and similar to a planning application there should be a right of appeal, albeit in much more limited circumstances. It’s a missed opportunity not to have included this”, stated Mr Daly.

The Irish Planning Institute has, however, on balance strongly welcomed many of the amendments tabled by the Minister, including provisions to deal with quarries, Appropriate Assessment and the introduction of substitute consent procedures arising from the European Union Court of Justice ruling relating to retention permissions.

“The Minister and his team are to be commended on their efforts to deal with a number of outstanding issues arising from EU legislation and court rulings that will remove uncertainty from the planning system”, said Mr Daly.

Ends

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