

Regional Planning Directorate



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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All Council Chief Executives

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Your reference:

Our reference:

15 October 2021

Dear Chief Executives

WITHDRAWAL OF PLANNING ADVICE NOTE (PAN) - IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Minister's decision to withdraw Planning Advice Note (PAN) – 'Implementation of Strategic Planning Policy on Development in the Countryside' which issued on 2 August 2021. The intention of the advice note was to assist with ensuring a consistent interpretation of the policy by re-emphasising and clarifying certain fundamental aspects of it in order to have a positive impact on the planning system overall and our rural communities. The PAN did not add to or change existing planning policy.

The Department has been somewhat taken back by the reaction to the PAN. It had not expected such a significant response to what is essentially an advice note to support the efficient and effective workings of the two-tier planning system. Regrettably, rather than bringing certainty and clarity, as was its intention, the PAN seems to have created confusion and uncertainty. Having listened carefully to and reflected on all the concerns expressed since it issued, the Minister has decided to withdraw the PAN today to swiftly restore clarity to this situation.

The Minister firmly believes that the SPPS does and should continue to provide opportunities for sustainable development in the countryside in general, including for farming families and other rural dwellers, striking a balance between supporting and sustaining rural communities and protecting the countryside from inappropriate development. Minister Mallon also considers that all stakeholders in the planning system have an important role to play in achieving this objective in the long term public interest. However, there is a particularly important onus on local planning authorities to take all

possible steps to ensure that in decision-taking and plan-making they properly and faithfully take account of the SPPS overall. Similarly, in relation to planning appeals and in terms of the independent examination of Local Development Plans the Planning Appeals Commission has an equally important responsibility. Similarly, in relation to planning appeals and in terms of the independent examination of Local Development Plans the Planning Appeals Commission has an equally important responsibility.

Whilst the PAN has been rescinded, the Department will now take stock of the concerns raised and undertake further engagement and analysis on this important policy area, to include consideration of current and emerging issues, such as the climate emergency and a green recovery from this pandemic. The Minister remains committed to ensuring that strategic planning policy for development in the countryside is fit for purpose going forward.

I would be grateful if this correspondence is brought to the attention of all your elected members and relevant officials, including Heads of Planning.

Yours sincerely

ANGUS KERR
Chief Planner
& Director of Regional Planning