



OPR Case Study Paper CSP02

Online Planning Services

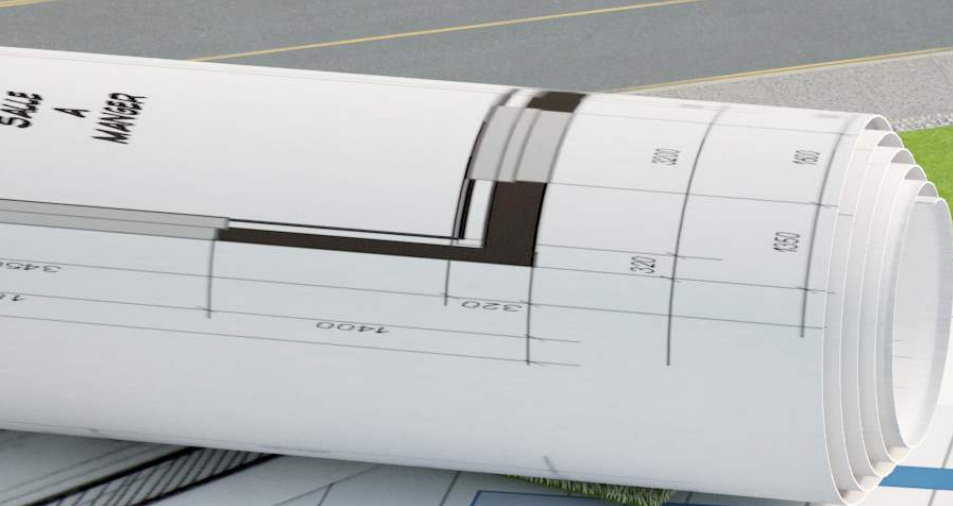


Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

A survey of the online availability of local authority planning application documentation



September 2021



MORTGAGE

Name of a relative name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Relationship: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Relationship: _____

Account no.: _____
Auto loans: _____
MORTGAGE COMPANY: _____
Address: _____
Account no.: _____
Auto loans: _____
OTHER: _____

ZIP Code: _____
Current balance: _____
Monthly: _____

april

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OPR case study papers (CSP) provide investigative research and analysis on specific areas of the planning system for practitioners, elected members and the public.

The intention of the case study papers is to support planning authorities in performance of their duties. For the avoidance of doubt, case study papers do not have the status of Ministerial Guidelines under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended*. They are issued to promote shared learning and highlight best practice, in accordance with the OPR's statutory remit to engage in education, training and research activities. Case study papers cannot be relied upon as containing, or as a substitute for, legal advice. Legal or other professional advice on specific issues may be required in any particular case.

Any comments or feedback in relation to this case study paper may be sent to research@opr.ie.

*herein referred to as 'the Act'.

1.0 Introduction

The availability of web-based planning services and the accessibility of planning application documentation on local authority websites has been a particular focus of public and stakeholder attention recently. The restrictions associated with the recent the Covid-19 pandemic placed an emphasis on the need to provide the public with adequate remote access to planning services including viewing planning applications online.

The quality of online planning services offered by local authorities is vital in supporting effective public engagement in planning processes. During periods of Covid-19 related travel restrictions, many local authorities offered an appointment-only service to members of the public seeking to view planning applications. In certain cases, local authorities could only facilitate appointments where an individual could demonstrate that there was insufficient online facilities to view the application or that there were exceptional circumstances.

There is obvious customer demand for quality access to web-based planning services to augment and extend the reach of traditional 'counter' services, i.e. in-person services at local authority offices. This demand has been accentuated as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. The enhancement of such services is also in line with the digital transformation agenda to which Government is committed. Accordingly, the Office of the Planning Regulator (the Office) conducted a survey of the online availability and quality of local authority planning application documentation.



The initial survey of the 31 local authorities' websites that informed the findings of this case study paper was completed during the late summer and early autumn period of 2020 and, consequently, reflects the state-of-play at that particular point in time. It is acknowledged that some authorities may have enhanced their procedures in the period following completion of the survey and before this document was published.

The Office would like to thank Mr Tom Fitzgerald who assisted the preparation of this case study paper by providing an independent user experience assessment of each of the authorities' websites from the perspective of a first time user.

2.0 Purpose of Case Study Paper

The Government's *National Digital Strategy* promotes the delivery of practical actions to increase engagement by citizens and businesses with public services online. The digital transformation agenda forms part of the overarching commitment of Government to harness technology and innovation so that public services become more agile in using digital technologies to enhance services being provided to customers.

The Government's 2016 action plan for housing and homelessness, *Rebuilding Ireland*, included the roll-out of e-Planning to the local government sector as a key objective to support the development of online planning services. This commitment was reaffirmed in September 2021 in the Government's new housing plan for Ireland, *Housing for All*.

The legislative provisions are already in place to enable the national introduction of e-Planning as a system allowing for the online submission of planning applications and appeals, and for the collection of associated fees. The system is currently being

piloted by Tipperary County Council. *Housing for All* sets out that the e-Planning system will be implemented nationally by early 2022.

The planning process has become significantly more sophisticated and complex in recent years, particularly in the implementation of European Directives, which has led to an increased volume of documentation to be submitted with planning applications. Consequently, there is an additional administrative burden on local authorities to ensure that all documentation is easily accessible, legible and published in a user-friendly manner on their websites.

This must be balanced with the importance of providing access to planning information to the public in the interests of transparency and public participation in the planning process. The ease of accessing documentation online can establish customer confidence in the planning system which, along with customer engagement, is a key component in the delivery of effective online planning services.

The Office has received several items of correspondence from members of public in relation to inconsistency in the standards of services for viewing planning application documentation online. On foot of this correspondence, the Office undertook a focused survey of online planning application services, including availability of documentation, with a view to providing a snapshot of the current operation of online services as well as highlighting good practice examples and learnings for the provision of such services into the future.

For the purpose of this case study paper, the Office randomly selected and surveyed a batch of over 155 individual planning applications across the 31 local authority

websites to determine the quality and accessibility of online planning application documentation. While this is a small sample in the context of the over 30,000 applications that are processed by authorities annually, it is sufficient to identify the differences in the presentation of information and the quality of the user experience resulting.

Areas of particular focus under the survey included:

- > the accessibility and navigability of the various planning search facilities, whether all relevant documents were uploaded,
- > whether individual documents are clearly named and categorised and indexed chronologically, and
- > the legibility of documents (scanned photos/maps of appropriate quality and colour), etc.

Finally, the survey considered whether there were good examples of other services being offered by authorities through their websites, e.g. the facilitation of online requests for pre-planning application consultations.

3.0 Overview of Key Findings

Overall, a significant amount of information is available on local authorities' websites regarding planning applications. Generally, this information is published promptly, however the Office noted the following:

- > The three ICT planning administration systems used by local authorities create differences in the navigability and quality of the user experience, whereas wider public sector online service initiatives, especially in the local government sector (e.g. www.fixmystreet.ie) show that common approach is much more effective;
- > There is a need for consistency in publishing information on local authority planning application viewers given the

varying approaches across local authorities. The Office will continue to engage with the local authority sector in this regard through liaison with the City & County Managers Association (CCMA)/Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and with individual authorities through our reviews programme; and

- > The move towards online planning applications is urgently required to ease the considerable administrative burden that scanning paper applications currently places on local authorities. Paper-based applications can also lead to difficulties in the legibility of documents.

4.0 National Policy Context

As noted in section 2.0 above, action 3.9 of *Rebuilding Ireland* committed to developing enhanced online planning services for local authorities and An Bord Pleanála and this commitment has been reaffirmed in actions 13.8 and 24.11 of *Housing for All*.

Updated legislation, introduced in 2018, legally underpins the rollout of e-Planning, to facilitate the submission of planning application documentation through local authority websites.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage initiated a pilot programme for e-Planning. This pilot scheme

began in Q4 2020 and will be rolled out over an 18-month period and Tipperary County Council was selected as the pilot local authority. The timeframe for the delivery of e-Planning nationally is early 2022.

The 2020 Programme for Government acknowledges that, in order to deliver on ambitious climate-related objectives, far reaching policy changes will be developed, including a 'strategy for remote service delivery'.

5.0 Legislative Provisions

The Act requires local authorities to display planning documentation online. Section 38(1) of the Act requires that where a local authority issues a decision in respect of a planning application, the documentation shall be made available on its website within three working days.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued Circular Letter PL/07 in 2020. This circular refers to new planning

regulations¹ which require local authorities to publish all planning applications and accompanying documents on their websites within five working days, subject to exceptional circumstances.

Section 33(1)(kb) of the Act outlines the legislative basis for introducing e-Planning through online submission of planning applications and submissions.

6.0 Survey Findings and Good Practice Examples

The Office completed an online survey in Q3 2020 which included 155 planning applications from 31 local authority websites. The 155 planning applications were selected from An Bord Pleanála's 'weekly list', ensuring that the applications had completed the full cycle of the statutory planning process. A range of development type applications were reviewed to allow a broad scope of application documentation across the 31 local authorities.

Figure 1 illustrates the methodology used by the Office in its survey. A synopsis of the survey data is contained in the Appendices A-C and is subdivided by regional assembly area.

The Office's appraisal of the online planning documentation consisted of a qualitative assessment of the key features integral to

user-friendly online engagement, which would contribute to the overall quality of the online service.

These features are detailed in Appendices A-C and were assessed using a comparative analysis across the 31 local authorities some of which include:

- > Online filing and categorisation of documents;
- > Chronology of documentation;
- > Legibility of the documentation; and
- > Accessibility and navigability.

Observations on a sample of the websites surveyed are provided below.

	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Statutory Notices					
Newspaper Notices	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Site Notices	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Drawings					
Site Location Map	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Site Layout Map	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Floor Area Plans	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Elevation Drawings	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Application Form					
Available Online	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Planning Documentation					
Site Character Report	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AA Screening	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Third Party Objections/ Submissions					
Available Online	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Internal Reports					
Road Dept.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Engineers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Planners Report					
Available Online	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Government Agencies					
Available Online	Y(Irish Water)	Y(Irish Water & Fisheries)	Y(Dept of Culture)	Y(Irish Water)	Y(Irish Water)
Additional Info Request					
AI Request	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	Y
AI Response	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N
Local Authority Decision					
Managers Order	Y	N	Y	Y	Y

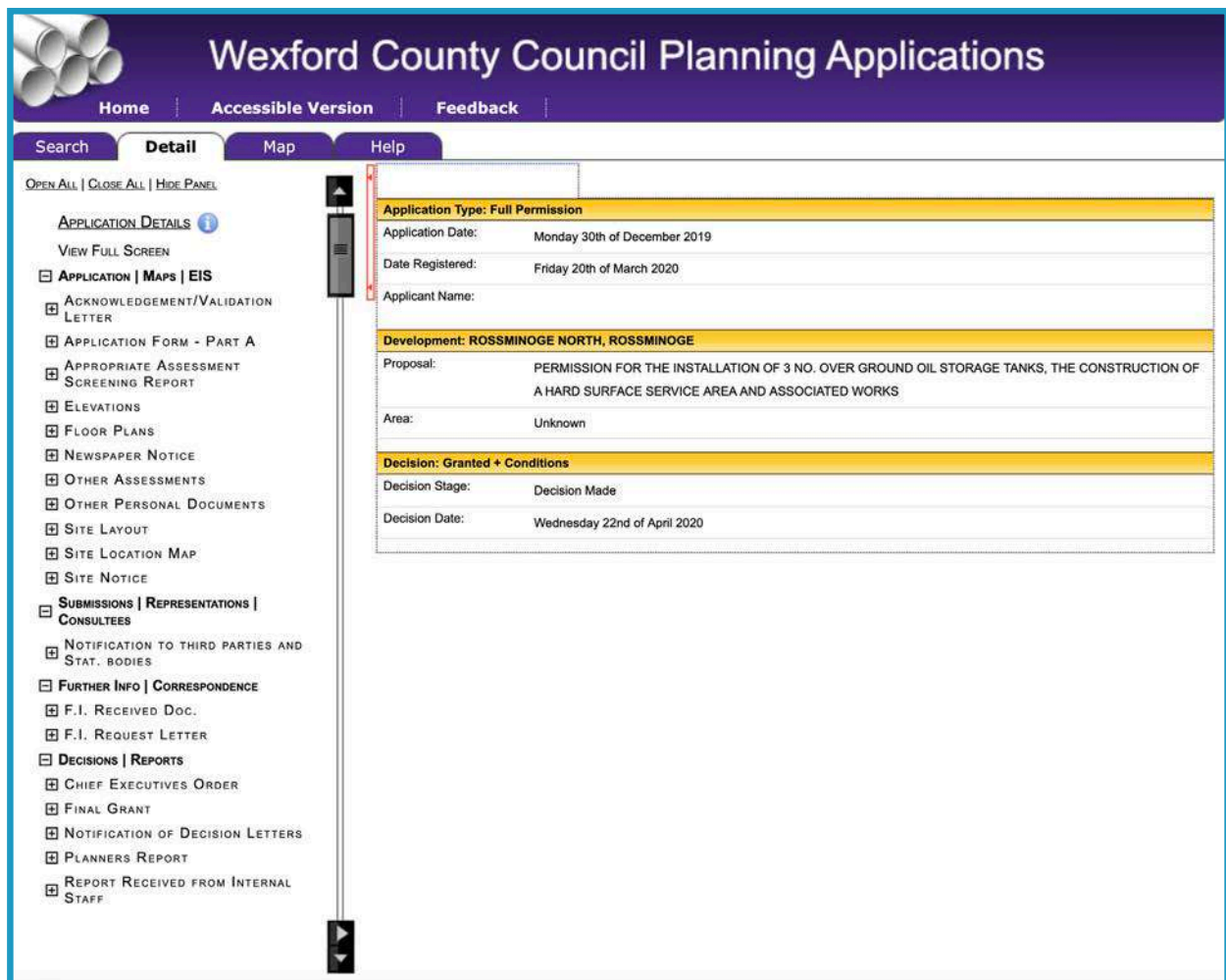
> Figure 1: methodology for reviewing online planning services

Wexford County Council

Figure 2 illustrates Wexford County Council’s website, which is considered as good practice in displaying planning application documentation. In this example, the files are subcategorised under headings which relate to the stage of the application process (e.g. application details, further information / correspondence and decisions). This makes search options more user-friendly.

Wexford County Council also has a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based

mapping tool, which locates the planning application on a map of the county. The GIS map has zoom functions to assist users when reviewing the potential impact of any proposed development in their local area. These features demonstrate that Wexford County Council’s online planning application viewer allows for effective public engagement with the planning process.



> Figure 2: Wexford County Council



Mayo County Council

Mayo County Council's website also categorised documentation at different stages of the planning application process, from the submission of the planning application to post-decision of the local authority.

Figure 3 illustrates how the files are categorised across the different stages of

the planning process. The documentation was dated, filed alphabetically and clearly labelled within the subcategories. This practice makes public engagement very accessible, user-friendly and generally offers a good alternative to a hard copy version of the planning application.

Mayo County Council
Planning Application Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Advertisements> Applications Forms> Schedule of Documents> Site Notice
Correspondence Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Letter of Acknowledgement> Receipt of Further Information> Requests of Further Information
Drawings/Photos/Maps <ul style="list-style-type: none">> All Drawings> GIS Dataset Maps> GIS Notification Report> GIS Site Location Map> Site Layout Map> Site Location Map
Post-Decision Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">> All other business after decision> Appeals> Compliance> Notification of Refusal
Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Internal Reports (validation)> Internal Reports (National Road Design)> Internal Reports (Area Engineer)> Internal Reports (Road Design)> Internal Reports (further information)> Planners Report

> Figure 3: Mayo County Council





7.0 Findings

Overall, quite a lot of planning application documentation is available on local authority websites, however differences emerge in terms of what information is available and how it's presented.

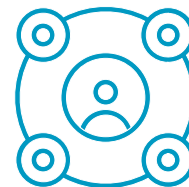
These differences are primarily due to the three planning administration systems that are used across the local authorities and the disparity of the quality of uploaded documentation such as document sequencing, labelling and categorising online files and the accessibility of files in terms of naming.

1. This review has established that local authorities, through their websites, generally provide good access to planning application documentation, with most providing access to between 90-100% of required documentation. However, a small percentage of local authority websites had less than 90% of required documentation available online, while some were missing documents. The findings of this part of the review are illustrated at Appendix D.



This can affect the public's ability to understand the various dimensions to a planning application. For example, in some instances the planner's report referenced documents relevant to the application that the local authority had not made available online.

2. The survey also identified significant variations in terms of user-experience between the different local authority websites, primarily resulting from the planning administration systems used.



The majority of local authorities use the LGMA supported 'iPlan' system for recording and displaying planning application documentation. The four Dublin local authorities and Wexford County Council use a proprietary UK derived 'APAS' system. Both Cork local authorities use a locally developed system called 'Odyssey' for recording planning applications online.

While all three systems offer a broadly comparable amount of information, the Office's survey concluded that the APAS system provided, in general, a more accessible and navigable platform.

Moreover, the Dublin local authorities who use APAS are moving to a new application called 'Agile Applications' which facilitates online submissions for planning applications, including accepting online payment for third party submissions. This application also supports the inclusion of an online date calculator for the planning application process. Separately, Dublin City Council has installed their own planning portal which allows the lodgement of smaller (domestic type) applications online.

While the advancement and improvements of online functions and capabilities is welcomed, the use of different systems across the local authorities can lead to variations in the presentation of information to the public.

- 3.** There are statutory procedures which local authorities must follow when a planning application is lodged. Planning documentation cannot be published on local authority websites until these procedures have been completed and it can take several days from the receipt of an application before planning documents appear on their website.



As referred to above, S.I. no. 180 of 2020 requires that, allowing for exceptional circumstances, planning application documentation is published on the local authority's website no later than five working days after receipt. This timeframe would appear to be presenting some challenges for local authorities during periods of high volume and/or when large applications with several documents are lodged. Additionally, because planning applications are submitted in hard copy, they need to be scanned and uploaded to websites. Local authorities are also required to record planning decisions on their website within three days of the decision.

- 4.** A good proportion, but not all local authorities record online documentation in date order, replicating the hard copy version of planning files. The chronological display of documentation provides the public, particularly those engaging with

the planning system for the first time, with a more easy to follow approach.

Some local authority websites file planning documentation online individually or within sub-groups of files depending on the stage of the application, e.g. pre-application stage, application stage, additional information stage, decision stage and appeal stage. This filing significantly reduces search time, giving additional clarity and allowing the public to search for documentation efficiently.

Mayo County Council and Wexford County Council have a good model in displaying planning application documentation online. This is an approach that can be emulated by local authorities, either as a guide or template to enhance remote engagement with planning applications.

- 5.** A small proportion of local authority websites record planning application documentation in alphabetical order, which typically is due to the back office document management enquiry systems. This can be quite challenging for members of the public unfamiliar with the mechanics of the planning process, especially for those engaging with the planning system for the first time. In these cases, files can be difficult to locate, for example where subcomponents of the file are stored within a report, e.g. the site notice stored in the planner's report.



6. Efficient labelling or categorising of planning application documentation will reduce search time and improve customer engagement. There is an apparent divergence, however, between local authority websites in presenting files.

In some instances, all submissions in a planning application file were labelled 'submission' with no additional details regarding date, nature of the submission or title of the third party, i.e. whether the submission was submitted by a member of the public or prescribed body. This makes it more difficult for the user to decipher the documents.

7. A very small number of local authorities seem to have a procedure whereby all of the planning application documentation is scanned into a single JPEG file, and the planning application is presented in this form on their website.

In these instances, the file can amount to 150-200 pages. This inevitably makes it more challenging and time consuming to search or scroll for an individual report or submission associated with a planning application.

In a small number of cases, colour documentation, including photographs and maps, were provided in the online planning file in black and white. There can be a number of reasons for this practice, but it can undermine the customer experience when viewing applications online as the images may not be as clear as if they were presented in colour.

8. Local authority websites advertise their pre-planning application consultation service which may range from email requests to the



completion of online forms. Some of the websites offer portals for submission of pre-planning documentation. Local authorities have also been offering online meetings to facilitate the public during Covid-19 restrictions.

Online information about pre-planning application consultations varies considerably between local authorities. There is scope for knowledge and skill sharing to improve online information and functionality regarding pre-planning consultations, which will allow for improved efficiency in the way the local authorities deliver the pre-planning service.

Conclusions

1. Local authority websites generally provide good online accessibility to planning application documentation. However, there are certain inconsistencies in how the documents are structured and the manner in which the viewing platforms are accessed. This is due to different ICT planning administration systems and procedures used across the local authority sector.
2. Differences in the structuring of online planning application documentation should be eradicated so that as citizens engage with planning services from one local authority to another, they have a consistent standard of service in how to view, access and download documentation.
3. A review of planning fees relative to operational costs would provide for financial resources to the fund the necessary improvements to online service provision for planning functions. Planning fees have remained unchanged since 2001. In 2019 (the most recent available data), planning fees amounted to less than 18% of operational costs (and less than 30% of the cost of providing development management services alone at €85m).
4. It is hoped that this report will stimulate discussion and will encourage local authorities to follow some of the good practice examples provided, bringing about greater standardisation in practice with regard to the presentation of planning documentation online in an accessible and navigable format for members of the public.

There is a strong case for moving to a standardised planning administration 'back-office' system to replace the three different systems used by the 31 local authorities subject to the availability of the necessary resources.

Such a system, allied to a general move towards the web-based submission of planning application documentation, would have the added benefit of reducing highly labour-intensive scanning which can delay the publishing of paper-based applications online once applications are initially processed and validated.

In the interim, and while awaiting a more consistent service output referred to in conclusion no. 2 above, the Office will continue to engage with the CCMA and LGMA, with a view to seeing what advice and support might be provided to individual authorities to bring about greater consistency in the presentation of information on online planning application viewers.

The Office will also follow up with authorities individually through the implementation of its reviews programme.

5. The online pre-planning application consultation service offered by Tipperary County Council is a leading example in this context². The use by other local authorities of this system, either as a guide or prototype, would provide multiple benefits.

A local authority sharing programme of 'knowledge' and 'know how' in relation to GIS improvements would make resource efficient savings to individual organisations and enhance customer engagement.

Building on the work of this case study paper, the Office has also been preparing another case study paper focusing specifically on the topic of pre-application consultations under section 247 of the Act. This paper delves into the various elements of the pre-application process, from the initial request by the applicant/developer through to the authority's response and the systems for recording and monitoring section 247 consultations.

6. While this survey reviewed a limited number of planning applications for each local authority, further analysis to determine public satisfaction with the online planning service would assist in identifying any further refinements necessary to enhance the online system from a user's perspective. An online customer service survey/questionnaire of local authority online planning services to get feedback from members of the public would assist with further refinements.



Appendix A

Appraisal of Presentation of Documentation – Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Dublin City	APAS	90	Filing was generally of a high standard. Some documents were partially uploaded.	Documents are saved in chronological order, featuring date. Files can also be sorted using different criteria.	Good, though some documents were difficult to read.	Excellent	PDF	Very good
Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown	APAS	94	Filing was generally of a high standard.	The option to sort documents using different criteria is available, e.g. by date. Some files are missing details such as date so cannot be sorted.	Good, some photos were scanned poorly affecting legibility.	Excellent	Txt Files	Good
Fingal	APAS	90	Filing was generally of a high standard, clearly labelled and easy to distinguish. However, some files were incorrectly labelled. Some newspaper notices were saved in the planning report.	Documents are saved chronologically. Documents can be sorted using different criteria. All criteria is available and clearly labelled.	Good, all documents are legible.	Good, hard to find on homepage but search function will take user straight to eplan.	PDF	Very good
Kildare	iPlan	100	Filing is good. Files are scanned separately. There is good file naming, however the additional information is inconsistent.	Documents are in chronological order. Some dates are not available on some documents.	Good, all documents are legible.	Pathway to the search function needs refinement. The planning search is labelled as 'ONLINE PLANNING ENQUIRY' on website and is difficult to navigate.	JPEG	Fair

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Laois	iPlan	100	Filing is good. Documents are well labelled and files are scanned separately.	Documents are not saved chronologically. Documents are sorted alphabetically. Dates are provided.	Good, all documents are legible. Some documents were saved in black and white.	Very good; access is straightforward to the website. Interface is a difficult to navigate. Holding the mouse over any link opens a dropdown menu) which may not be clear to all users.	PDF (mislabelled as JPEG)	Very good
Longford	iPlan	95	Filing is good. Files are mostly scanned separately with adequate detail. There are the occasional documents in need of refinement in terms of quality regarding added details or decision order.	Documents are not in chronological order. Documents are uploaded alphabetically, with no dates provided.	Good, all documents are legible. Some documents were scanned poorly, making them difficult to read.	Very good, the path to the planning search is more time consuming than general systems but the path itself is quite clear.	JPEG	Good
Louth	iPlan	94	Filing is inconsistent with detail in labelling and occasionally files are saved as one.	Documents are in chronological order. However no dates are provided.	Some documents were scanned poorly making them difficult to read.	Very good, the path to the planning search is circuitous but the path itself is clear.	PDF (mislabelled as JPEG)	Fair
Meath	iPlan	94	Documents are scanned separately with the extra details (subject) generally re-stating the document title.	Documents are sorted alphabetically.	Good all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Very good
Offaly	iPlan	99	Labelling is inconsistent often very good, especially with maps and elevations but less clear with regards to reports.	Documents are sorted alphabetically without dates.	Good all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Very good
South Dublin	APAS	99	Filing is generally very good with a lot of detail. Planners report and managers order are generally saved together.	Documents are sorted alphabetically with a few exceptions. Dates are not provided.	Fair, documents are clear but are often saved at angles affecting legibility.	Excellent	PDF	Very good

Online Planning Services

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Westmeath	iPlan	84	Filing was inconsistent. Files missing, saved in one document, mislabelled, uploaded on multiple occasions.	Documents are sorted alphabetically without dates.	Some documents were scanned poorly making them difficult to read.	Very good	JPEG & PDF	Poor
Wicklow	iPlan	99	Good, documents are filed separately. Documents could have more details in the name.	Documents are sorted alphabetically without dates.	Good all documents are legible.	Fair; planning search is found behind the section "living". Planning search is not clearly labelled.	JPEG	Good

Appendix B

Appraisal of Presentation of Documentation – Southern Regional Assembly

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Carlow	iPlan	80	Filing ensued longer searches. Files are often saved under one heading e.g. site notice included in with the planners report, making it difficult to find. All Submissions are labelled "submission" with little distinguishing details to differentiate between them.	Documents are saved in chronological order.	Good, all documents are legible.	Very good, address function varies in precision for street name to general area.	JPEG	Fair
Clare	iPlan	100	Filing is generally good. In some instances the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Site Character Report were filed in the Planners Report. Generally all the documents are named adequately and have further details when required.	Documents are saved in chronological order.	Good, all documents are legible.	Excellent; very clear to use and to find the planning search.	JPEG	Very good
Cork	Odyssey	92	Filing is generally good. Documents are labelled, scanned separately and provide extra details where appropriate.	Documents are saved in chronological order.	Good, all documents are legible.	Very good; though finding the planning search facility can be difficult	PDF	Good

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Cork City	iPlan	100	Filing was inadequate. There were a number of incomplete documents, some documents were uploaded multiple times, varying differentiation between documents and mis-titled documents.	Documents are saved alphabetically. Some documents are uploaded multiple times while other documents are missing.	Good, all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Fair
Kerry	iPlan	89	Filing was not categorised. All documents are saved in one large document.	Documents are not filed but appear to be in chronological order.	Good, some documents not scanned well. Documents tend to vary in size and sometimes orientation.	Very poor, must enter map to access ePlan.	PDF	Poor
Kilkenny	iPlan	94	Filing is good. Documents are well labelled and are scanned separately.	Documents are sorted alphabetically.	Good, all documents are legible.	Very good quite easy to find planning search.	JPEG	Good
Limerick City & County	iPlan	99	Documents are scanned separately but the file names range greatly.	Documents are uploaded in alphabetical order with no dates provided.	Good, all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Very good
Tipperary	iPlan	99	Documents are uploaded separately but detail basic particularly regarding internal reports. No dates and very little assisting or supplementary information is provided.	Documents are filed alphabetically with no dates provided.	Good, although some documents were scanned poorly making them difficult to read.	Excellent	JPEG	Fair

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Waterford City & County	iPlan	99	Filing was adequate. Documents are scanned separately but detail of files unclear.	Documents are sorted alphabetically without dates.	Good. However, some documents were scanned poorly making them difficult to read. There were some blank files.	Good, the path to search function is logical but the links are hard to find in the text on the website.	PDF (mislabelled as JPEG)	Fair
Wexford	APAS	97	High standard of filing. Documents are scanned separately and clearly named.	Documents are uploaded alphabetically sections of specific stages in the process with no dates.	Good all documents are legible.	Excellent	PHP	Excellent

Appendix C

Appraisal of Presentation of Documentation – Northern and Western Regional Assembly

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Cavan	iPlan	97	Naming of files absent details, making it difficult to distinguish between files. Some files are uploaded in one document under headings which make it difficult to distinguish.	Documents are ordered alphabetically with no dates provided.	Fair. Some documents were saved inefficiently, making them difficult to read.	Excellent very easy to access planning search.	JPEG	Poor
Donegal	iPlan	100	Filing was generally good. Site notices and newspaper notices were saved in with the application form. Documents were generally labelled clearly.	Documents are saved chronologically, featuring date.	Good, all documents are legible.	Excellent	PDF/Word Document	Good
Leitrim	iPlan	99	Filing is good. Documents are well labelled and files are scanned separately. There are good details included (sender and date).	Documents are sorted alphabetically with dates provided.	Good, all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Very good
Galway City	iPlan	100	Filing not effective. Files are sorted into maps and correspondence. Filing not sorted in any order. Documents can have up to 180 pages in them.	Documents are not saved chronologically. There are two files, correspondence (all written files) and maps (all drawings). These folders are not in chronological order and weakens the public search engagement.	Good, all documents are legible. However, the zoom function on website can making viewing documents difficult at times. Some files were saved in black and white only.	Excellent	Virtual Viewer	Poor

Planning Authority	System used	All relevant documents uploaded (see attached note) in %	Appropriate filing - Individual documents clearly named / categorised (rather than entire files scanned as one record)	Documents indexed (chronology - most recent document / correspondence first)	Legibility of documents (scanned photos/ maps of appropriate quality and colour)	Accessibility and navigability of planning search facility Rating 1. Very Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent	Standard software applications used (e.g. PDF, Jpeg, Word) or must applications be downloaded to view	Rating
Galway County	iPlan	99	All planning documents and statutory notices are saved in one document. Filing is otherwise generally good.	Documents are saved in chronological order, featuring date.	Good, all documents are legible	Excellent	PDF	Very good
Mayo	iPlan	100	Very Good, lots of detail and files are scanned separately.	Documents are uploaded alphabetically sections of specific stages in the process.	Good, all documents are legible and saved in colour.	Very good, a few steps but fairly straightforward.	Webpage	Excellent
Monaghan	iPlan	97	The interface is very different to others and difficult to navigate. Documents are scanned together inconsistently.	Documents are scanned with no order. They are saved together with labels which make it difficult to follow.	All documents are legible however, the zoom and scroll function is very sensitive. Documents must also load page by page which is slow. Difficult to scale documents in a way that is easy to view given large permanent search bar.	Moderate, filed under "Council" or accessible under services which is a difficult to locate as it is written in white text against a white background.	Webpage	Poor
Roscommon	iPlan	100	Good, documents are filed separately but naming is very limited.	Documents are sorted alphabetically.	Good all documents are legible.	Excellent	JPEG	Good
Sligo	iPlan	99	Filing was not good. Inconsistent with some files saved in one document. Details are limited.	Documents are sorted alphabetically.	Misleading, some documents were scanned poorly making them difficult to read. There were a lot of blank pages in the files.	Excellent	JPEG	Fair

Appendix D

Availability of Planning Documentation Online

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

PLANNING DOCUMENTATION	60 Online Planning Applications Availability of Documents Online
Statutory Notices	
Newspaper Notices	95%
Site Notices	93%
Drawings	
Site Location Map	93%
Site Layout Map	95%
Floor Area Plans	98%
Elevation Drawings	97%
Application Form	
Available Online	98%
Planning Documentation	
Site Character Report	98%
AA Screening	97%
Other	98%
Third Party Objections / Submissions	
Available Online	95%
Internal Reports	
Road Dept.	98%
Engineers	98%
Environment	98%
Other	98%
Planners Report	
Available Online	85%
Government Agencies	
Available Online	98%
Additional Information Request	
AI Request	97%
AI Response	97%
Local Authority Decision	
Managers Order	92%
An Bord Pleanála Decision	98%

Southern Regional Assembly

PLANNING DOCUMENTATION	50 Online Planning Applications Availability of Documents Online
Statutory Notices	
Newspaper Notices	98%
Site Notices	98%
Drawings	
Site Location Map	98%
Site Layout Map	98%
Floor Area Plans	98%
Elevation Drawings	98%
Application Form	
Available Online	98%
Planning Documentation	
Site Character Report	100%
AA Screening	98%
Other	98%
Third Party Objections / Submissions	
Available Online	98%
Internal Reports	
Road Dept.	100%
Engineers	100%
Environment	100%
Other	100%
Planners Report	
Available Online	82%
Government Agencies	
Available Online	94%
Additional Information Request	
AI Request	92%
AI Response	94%
Local Authority Decision	
Managers Order	90%
An Bord Pleanála Decision	100%

Northern and Western Regional Assembly

PLANNING DOCUMENTATION	45 Planning Applications Availability of Documents Online
Statutory Notices	
Newspaper Notices	100%
Site Notices	100%
Drawings	
Site Location Map	100%
Site Layout Map	100%
Floor Area Plans	100%
Elevation Drawings	100%
Application Form	
Available Online	100%
Planning Documentation	
Site Character Report	100%
AA Screening	98%
Other	98%
Third Party Objections / Submissions	
Available Online	100%
Internal Reports	
Road Dept.	100%
Engineers	100%
Environment	100%
Other	100%
Planners Report	
Available Online	98%
Government Agencies	
Available Online	100%
Additional Information Request	
AI Request	100%
AI Response	98%
Local Authority Decision	
Managers Order	93%
An Bord Pleanála Decision	98%

Appendix E

Advisory Note for the Recording of Online Planning Documentation

1. Application Stage

Application Documentation

- Record of pre-application consultation
- Application form
- Copy of site notice
- Page of the relevant newspaper notice
- Part V details or S97 Certificate

Support Documentation

- Reports (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment Report and copy of confirmation notice, Traffic Impact Assessment, Site Character Report, NIS)
- Written consents

Application Drawings

- Site location map
- Site layout map
- Floor plans, elevations and sections
- All other drawings, photographs etc.

Acknowledgement Documents

- Letter of Acknowledgement

2. Assessment Stage
Observations / Representations / Consultees
- Third parties
- Prescribed bodies
- Elected members
- Government Agencies
Internal / External Reports
- Reports (water services)
- Internal Reports (road design)
- Planners Report
Further Information Requests
- Request for further information
Further Information Documentation
- Receipt of further information (response)
- Receipt of further information (drawings)
- Receipt of further information (documentation)
- Receipt of significant further information (notifications)
- Planners Report
3. Local Authority Decision
- Chief Executive's Order
- Notification of decision letters
4. Appeals
- Appeal correspondence
- Appeal decision
- Appeal notifications
5. Post Decision Correspondence
- Correspondence with Planning Authority
- Financial contributions and/or bonds
- Compliance with conditions

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