

The Society of
Chartered 
Surveyors

An Bord Pleanála
64 Marlborough St
Dublin 1

24 September 2010

RE: FORMULATION FOR A STRATEGY STATEMENT FOR AN BORD PLEANÁLA

Dear Sirs

We write in response to your letter of 1 September 2010 seeking external stakeholder consultation and observations on the role, performance and services provided by the Board. This is a joint submission from the Society of Chartered Surveyors and the Irish Auctioneers and Valuers Institute.

By way of brief background, the Society of Chartered Surveyors represents over 2,000 qualified chartered surveyors and a further 1,000 graduate trainees who are undergoing their assessment of professional competence in order to achieve the gold standard of chartered status. Members of the Society are typically professionals employed in the land, property and construction markets through private practice, in central, regional and local government, in public agencies, in academic institutions, in business organisations and in non-governmental organisations.

IAVI members' expertise lies primarily in the provision of professional property advice in relation to the letting, sale, acquisition, valuation and other professional services in the residential, commercial, agricultural, leisure, development and investment property sectors.

The broad areas of expertise within the SCS include:

- Quantity Surveying
- Building Surveying
- Valuations surveying
- Planning & Development
- Geomatics & Land surveying.

In respect to the "An Bord Pleanála Draft high level goals for strategy statement - August 2010" the SCS observations are as follows:

1. To play our part as an independent national body in ensuring the physical development and major infrastructural projects in Ireland respect the principles of sustainable development and are in compliance with European Union and national legislation.

The Society of Chartered Surveyors would suggest that in addition to the clear adherence to national and regional policy, the An Bord Pleanála should also be proactive in commenting on development plans and local areas plans adopted by Local Authorities. For example there is ample evidence of the Retail Planning guidelines for planning Authorities 2006 and the Retail strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008 – 2016 being in conflict with the development plans and local area plans adopted by Local Authorities.

2. To deliver a quality service, in timescales compliant with statutory objectives, to stakeholders including the public at large, in line with the Public Sector Transformation Programme and facilitated by up-to-date Information and Communication Technology Systems

According to the Chairman of the Board at a presentation to the Joint Committee on Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 36% of cases in September 2009 were determined within the 18 week statutory objective and the average time taken across all cases decided was 20.6 weeks.

Given the current economic climate within the country, the Society of Chartered Surveyors would suggest that An Bord Pleanála should consider a goal for setting targets and time limits for decisions that improved upon the 'statutory limits' not just meet them and minimize the use of deferral to extensions. This would help bring projects to site quicker and minimise holding costs.

Therefore, resources must be made available to An Bord Pleanála to achieve this, as part of its review of its high level strategic goals.

3. To be an employer of choice for a highly skilled and professional staff directed by a Board cogniscent of its responsibilities and containing the required skill sets and to foster an employment environment where the contribution of each person can reach its full potential.

We support this statement

4. To support the promotion of an effective high quality planning service nationally as a significant component of an integrated public sector.

We would support greater use of detailed Impact Assessment studies which clearly address the hierarchical national and regional policy and its impact locally for each site. For schemes to be viable it is important that appropriate tests are rigorously implemented. As well as preserving the hierarchical policy this will also assist stakeholders to have greater confidence in the end product and ultimately to deliver successful schemes.

5. To be, and be recognised as, an independent body complying with the highest standards of corporate governance and making decisions in an efficient, fair and open manner.

We recognise and support this statement.

There is a concern among some construction and property professionals at the number of instances in which the Board has ignored the strong recommendations of its own inspectors and has made a decision which was

contrary to the inspectors recommendations. This undermines the public's faith in an Bord Pleanála and reduces the likelihood of the fifth high level goal being achieved.

6. To ensure effective financing of the organisation through sound financial management practice including identifying and maximising potential income streams in conjunction with continued Central Exchequer financial support for its role.

We support this statement

7. To engage in effective working relationships with stakeholder organisations in the interests of the Board's strategic goals and objectives.

An Bord Pleanála could consider a process of clear and regular dialogue with professional bodies, so as to enable them to understand the underlying principles of An Bord Pleanála strategies allowing the professional bodies to educate their members. The SCS suggests an annual meeting be had with the various institutes and societies representing professional in the built environment this would allow a forum for matters of relevance to planning to be discussed.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you again to discuss the above in further detail.

Yours sincerely

SOCIETY OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS