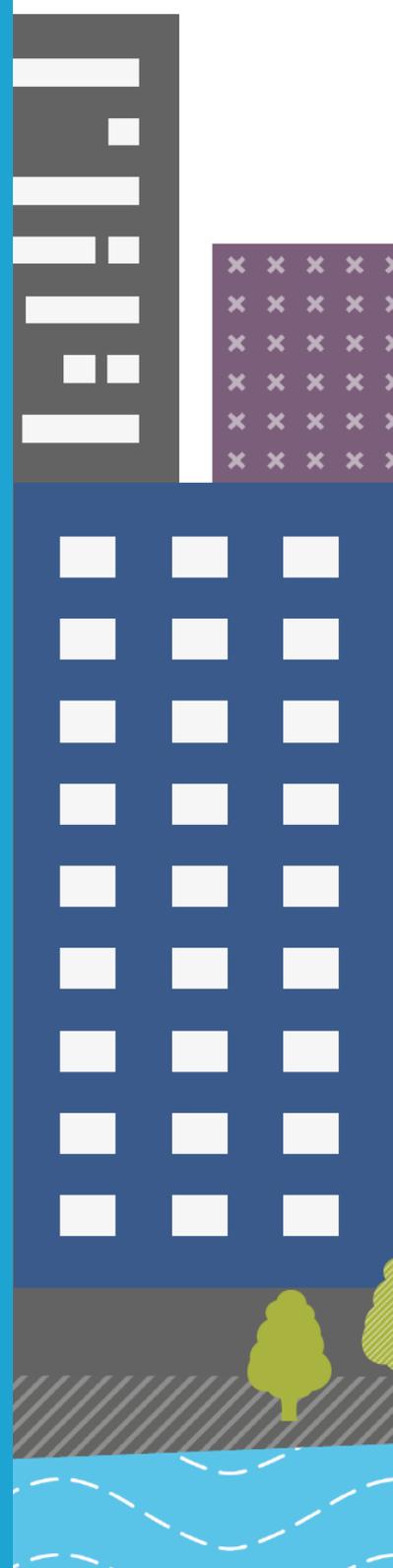


An  
Bord  
Pleanála

# Making an observation on a Strategic Housing Development application

## Members of the public

December 2021



## About this guide

This guide provides information on how you can give your written comments to An Bord Pleanála on a Strategic Housing Development application case. When you give your comments, you are said to be making an observation or a submission. This guide will use the term observation and will help you to make a valid observation on a Strategic Housing Development application case. If you are preparing an observation as a [prescribed body](#), please see a [separate information guide on how to make your observation](#).

This guide is published to provide general information, assistance and guidance only. It is not a legal interpretation of the legislation. Readers must follow the relevant statutory provision for their own particular circumstances and, in doing so, should obtain their own expert advice if necessary.

### Data Protection

An Bord Pleanála uses your personal data only to provide our services and to fulfil our legal duties. The personal data you supply will be circulated to other relevant parties and made available in the public domain about any matter before An Bord Pleanála.

To view our full policy statements on Data Protection, please go to <https://www.pleanala.ie/en-IE/Privacy>

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has awarded this document its Plain English Mark



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## Terms

Some terms we use in this guide are:

<b>Act</b>	A law that has been passed by the Oireachtas (parliament) and approved by the President.
<b>Agent</b>	A person who acts on your behalf in an appeal, application or referral.
<b>Appropriate assessment (AA)</b>	An examination of a plan or project to evaluate how it might negatively affect a site which is protected under the EU Habitats Directive. (This is a directive about wildlife and nature conservation.)
<b>Board</b>	The Board of An Bord Pleanála.
<b>Environmental impact assessment report (EIAR)</b>	A document an applicant prepared that assesses the likely significant effects on the environment of a proposed development.
<b>Invalid</b>	Does not meet all of the statutory requirements needed by law and regulations to be considered a case.
<b>Lodged, to lodge</b>	To give or submit something to An Bord Pleanála.
<b>Observation</b>	A document submitted by an <b>Observer</b> (see also <b>Submission</b> ).
<b>Observer (Applications)</b>	Any person, other than the applicant, who comments on the application.

<b>Opinion</b>	Within three weeks of the last pre-application consultation meeting, the Board will form and issue an Opinion to the prospective applicant. The Opinion will state whether the documents submitted for the pre-application consultations are a reasonable basis for a strategic housing development application, or if more consideration or changes to the submitted documents are needed.
<b>Oral hearing</b>	An oral hearing is a meeting to allow relevant issues in a case to be discussed and examined.
<b>Our</b>	An Bord Pleanála.
<b>Planning authority</b>	The local authority – county council, city council, or county and city council – responsible for planning in its area.
<b>Planning and Development Act 2000; Planning and Development Acts (as amended)</b>	An Act of the Oireachtas passed in 2000 about matters governing the planning system in Ireland. Parts of this 2000 Act have since been changed or amended by several other Acts. Together these Acts are known as the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2020.

<b>Pre-application consultations</b>	Compulsory process where a prospective applicant consults with An Bord Pleanála and the relevant planning authority about a proposed strategic housing development. The prospective applicant gives required documents to An Bord Pleanála. One or more meetings also take place. These consultations allow An Bord Pleanála to form an <b>Opinion</b> .
<b>Prescribed body</b>	An organisation or body specified in regulations made by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
<b>Prospective applicant</b>	Someone who may wish to apply for permission for a development.
<b>Public access</b>	After a decision has been made on a case, you can view the decided planning case file within three days after the decision. This is called public access.
<b>Regulations</b>	A law or rules made by an Act or sometimes a Government minister.
<b>Scoping</b>	An optional procedure contained in EU directives. Scoping allows a prospective applicant to ask the consent authority (for example: An Bord Pleanála) to give an opinion in writing on what information is needed for a proposed development in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an environmental impact assessment report (EIAR), or</li> <li>• natura impact statement (NIS).</li> </ul>

<b>Screening</b>	An optional procedure where a prospective applicant can ask An Bord Pleanála for an appropriate assessment (AA) screening determination for a proposed development.
<b>Statutory</b>	Something that is decided, set up or controlled by statute law. Statute law is a law passed by parliament.
<b>Statutory requirements</b>	Requirements needed by law for a case to be valid.
<b>Strategic housing development (SHD)</b>	Applications for planning permission that go directly to An Bord Pleanála for certain housing developments.
<b>Submission</b>	A document on appeals or applications which may include supporting materials such as photographs, plans, drawings and technical guidance. (The document can be typed or handwritten.)
<b>Valid</b>	Meets all statutory requirements needed by law and regulations to be considered by us.
<b>Uploader</b>	Part of our website where a person can send a document electronically to An Bord Pleanála.
<b>Us</b>	An Bord Pleanála.
<b>We</b>	An Bord Pleanála.
<b>You</b>	You as a person, company, group, organisation or State authority.

<b>Zone; zoned</b>	An area of land which may be allowed to be developed for certain uses as set out in a: <ul data-bbox="587 331 1165 495" style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City Development Plan, or</li><li>• County Development Plan, or</li><li>• City and County Development Plan.</li></ul>
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## Before making an observation

### What is strategic housing development?

Strategic housing developments (SHD) are applications that go directly to An Bord Pleanála for decision. These decisions cannot be appealed. Some of the types of application under strategic housing developments are:

Type of development	Details on development
(a) 100 or more houses	The development of 100 or more houses on land which is zoned in the local development plan for residential use. Land may also be zoned for a mixture of residential and other uses.
(b) Student accommodation units	The development of student accommodation units which would contain 200 or more bed spaces. The proposed site is zoned to allow student accommodation in one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a City Development Plan,</li><li>• a County Development Plan,</li><li>• a City and County Development Plan.</li></ul> The zone may also allow a mixture of student accommodation and other uses on a site.
(c) Mixed development of housing and student accommodation	Development that includes a mix of houses and student accommodation.

<p><b>(d) Alteration of existing permission from a planning authority</b></p>	<p>An applicant received planning permission from a local planning authority for a development under section 34 of the Planning and Development Acts. The applicant now wishes to make changes to the development. The changes will now mean the revised development falls into categories (a), (b) or (c) and an application for the change must be made to An Bord Pleanála.</p> <p>For example: a development was granted permission for 96 homes. The developer now wishes to build 5 further homes making a total of 101 homes on the site.</p>
<p><b>(e) Alteration of existing permission from An Bord Pleanála</b></p>	<p>An applicant received planning permission from An Bord Pleanála for a development under the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. The applicant now wishes to make changes to the development.</p>

### How will I know when an application is made?

Before an applicant submits a SHD application to An Bord Pleanála, they must do two things:

- Publish a newspaper notice about the proposed development. The newspaper must circulate in the local area.
- Put up a public site notice at the site of the proposed development.

Both the newspaper notice and site notice should give the location of the application and describe the proposed development. The notices should also inform the public of the times and places where the application can be viewed free of charge.

## Where can I see or get copies of the application?

There are two ways you can see or get copies of the application.

### A website where the application can be viewed

The applicant must provide a website where the public can view the application. You can find the website address on the newspaper notice **and** on the site notice. The notices will provide information on how the public can make an observation to An Bord Pleanála about the application. The website must be kept live and available to the public for at least eight weeks after An Bord Pleanála's decision.

### Hard copies at An Bord Pleanála's office and local planning authority's office

The applicant must give paper copies of the application to An Bord Pleanála and the local planning authority. The applications can be viewed at An Bord Pleanála's office and the local planning authority's office free of charge. You can also buy a copy of the application for a [specified fee](#). The fee depends on the number and format of the pages in the application documents.

If an environmental impact assessment report (EIAR) is submitted with the application, you can view and buy a copy of it at An Bord Pleanála's office and the local planning authority's offices.

## Can I see or get copies of the pre-application consultation file?

Yes. However, before we can make the case file available to the public, two steps need to happen:

1. The pre-application consultations have finished with the Board issuing an Opinion.
2. The applicant has made a valid application to An Bord Pleanála.

When these steps are taken, you can [view these decided case files by using our public access service](#). You can find details on our website. The case file will contain the records of any meetings between An Bord Pleanála and the prospective applicant held during the pre-application consultation process.

### **Can I see or get copies of the scoping case file?**

Yes. However, before we can make these documents available to the public, two steps need to happen.

1. The scoping case has finished with the Board issuing an Opinion.
2. The applicant has made a valid application to An Bord Pleanála.

When these steps are taken, you can [view these decided case files by using our public access service](#). You can find details on our website. The case file will contain the records of any meetings between An Bord Pleanála and the prospective applicant held during the pre-application consultation process.

## How long do I have to make an observation?

If you want to make an observation, you must do this within **five** weeks of the date An Bord Pleanála receives the application. The law does not allow us to accept a late observation for any reason. You can find details for current applications, including the dates they were **lodged** with us, on [our website](https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/strategic-housing-development) at <https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/strategic-housing-development>

## How much does an observation cost?

An observation costs €20.

## How can I pay for my observation?

There are many ways you can pay a fee to An Bord Pleanála.

	In person at our reception	In the post	Online using uploader
Cash	✓ Accepted	We advise you not to send cash in the post.	✗ Not accepted
Debit and Credit Cards*	✓ Accepted	✗ Not accepted	✓ Accepted
Cheques	✓ Accepted	✓ Accepted	✗ Not accepted
Bankers Drafts	✓ Accepted	✓ Accepted	✗ Not accepted
Postal Orders	✓ Accepted	✓ Accepted	✗ Not accepted

\* Please note we do not accept debit or credit card payments over the phone.

You can find more details about [fees and charges](#) and [how you can pay for fees](#) on our website.

## Making an observation

### What do I need to do to make a valid observation?

You should carefully prepare your grounds of observation (reasons and arguments) and any documents you wish to include. When you have made your observation, you **cannot** make any further observations unless we specifically ask you for them.

Please note that An Bord Pleanála **cannot** consider non-planning issues.

To make a valid observation, you must:

✓	put your observation in writing (either typed or handwritten).
✓	clearly state <b>your own name and postal address</b> . If a planning agent is acting for you in this observation, the agent must clearly write their own name and postal address <b>as well as</b> your name and postal address.
✓	give us enough details to allow us to easily identify the <b>application</b> you wish to make an observation on. Examples of the details we accept are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the name and location of the proposed development in the application (for example: Town Square Project, Main Street, Ballytown, Co. Ballytown), <b>or</b></li><li>• the An Bord Pleanála case reference number for the <b>application</b>. The case reference number is the middle six-digit number (for example: <b>300000</b>).</li></ul>
✓	give us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• your planning grounds of observation (reasons and arguments), <b>and</b></li><li>• any items you wish to support your grounds of observation.</li></ul>
✓	pay the correct fee of €20.
✓	make your observation on time and within the five-week time period beginning on the date An Bord Pleanála receives the application.

You can use the [observation form](#) to help you make the observation, or you can also just write to us. A [checklist to make a valid observation](#) is available on our website.

## Oral hearings

### Can I request an oral hearing?

Yes. You can request an oral hearing. The Board will generally only hold an oral hearing to help it understand a particularly complex case **or** if it involves significant national or local issues. The Board has the power to hold an oral hearing with or without a request for one. In SHD applications, oral hearings will only be held in very rare cases.

### How do I ask for an oral hearing?

To ask for an oral hearing you need to make an oral hearing request. To make a request you **must**:

- tick the box that says “Yes, I want to request an oral hearing” on the [observation form](#), **or**
- write in your observation that you want to ask for an oral hearing, **or**
- write to us and ask for one.

Please note, if you request an oral hearing, you will have to pay the €20 observation fee plus **an additional non-refundable fee** of €50, so €70 in all.

## Sending us the observation online

The fastest and easiest way to send us your observation is online. Use our online uploader facility at: <https://online.pleanala.ie/en-ie/housing/observation>

The online uploader facility will also allow you to pay the fee online. When you have successfully sent your observation, you will get an email to confirm that we have received it.



To use the online uploader facility, you will need to have **completed** your observation and either saved it as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF. The online uploader facility does **not** make the observation for you.

### How do I get the observation document ready?

You can prepare your observation document either by using the [observation form](#) or by writing your document and then saving it as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF. If you have handwritten your document, you will need to scan it and save it as a PDF. You can only upload **one** document online and this should not exceed the maximum allowed file size of 30MB. Please name your document in either of two ways:

Ways to name document	Example
Case number and your name	300000 – Ann Duine
The name and location of the development and your name	Town Square Project, Ballytown – John Murphy

**Tip:** Make sure that the name of your document does **not** end in a full stop (.).

## What will I need to upload the observation online?

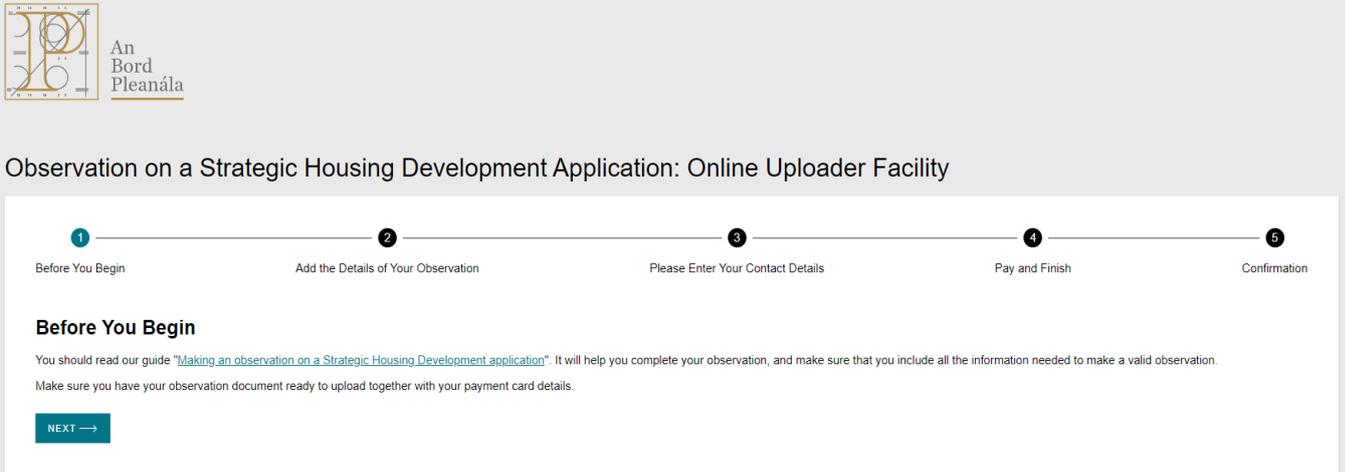
Before you use the online uploader facility, you will need:

✓	an up-to-date version of an internet browser such as: Microsoft Edge, Chrome, Firefox and Safari.
✓	an email address to receive an email confirming we have received your observation.
✓	your observation saved as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF that should not exceed the maximum allowed file size of 30MB.
✓	the details of the application you wish to make an observation on. Details the uploader accepts are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the An Bord Pleanála case reference number for the application. (for example: 300000), <b>or</b></li><li>• the name and location of the proposed development in the application (for example: Town Square Project, Main Street, Ballytown, Co. Ballytown).</li></ul>
✓	a debit or credit card to pay the correct fee.

## How do I use the uploader?

To use the uploader, go to <https://online.pleanala.ie/en-ie/housing/observation>

The uploader will then take you through the four pages / steps to upload your document. This is the first page of the uploader:



The screenshot shows the 'An Bord Pleanála' logo at the top left. The main heading is 'Observation on a Strategic Housing Development Application: Online Uploader Facility'. Below this is a progress bar with five steps: 1. Before You Begin, 2. Add the Details of Your Observation, 3. Please Enter Your Contact Details, 4. Pay and Finish, and 5. Confirmation. Step 1 is currently active. The content for Step 1 includes a sub-heading 'Before You Begin', a paragraph of instructions, and a 'NEXT →' button.

<b>Page 1</b>	Introduction
<b>Page 2</b>	<p>On the top half of this page, you <b>must</b> give:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the An Bord Pleanála case reference number for the application, <b>or</b></li> <li>• the name and location of the proposed development in the application.</li> </ul> <p>In the lower half of this page you can attach your observation. You can upload and attach your observation into the grey box by clicking on the button:</p> <div data-bbox="611 786 949 869" style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Select your document</p> </div> <p>When the observation has been uploaded, it will appear in the grey box.</p> <div data-bbox="564 949 1029 1003" style="border: 1px solid grey; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>300000 Ann Duine.pdf — 6.5 KB <span style="float: right;">✕</span></p> </div>
<b>Page 3</b>	<p>On this page you <b>must</b> give:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your name, and</li> <li>• your email address in the <b>two</b> separate boxes to make sure we have your correct email address.</li> </ul> <p>If you are an agent uploading an observation for a client, you must give <b>your</b> name and email address.</p>

<p><b>Page 4</b></p>	<p>On this page, you will be asked if you are ready to make the observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If <b>yes</b>, you will move to the payment section to pay the fee.</li> <li>• If <b>no</b>, you can go back to make changes.</li> </ul> <p>The payments section will ask you to select the fee you want to pay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation – €20</li> <li>• Observation with an oral hearing request – €70</li> </ul> <p>You will then be asked for your debit or credit card details. Please check the details carefully when entering them.</p> <p>When ready click on <b>Pay and finish</b> and your observation will be submitted.</p>
<p><b>Page 5</b></p>	<p>When successfully completed, you will see the <b>Confirmation</b> screen.</p> <p>You will also be emailed a receipt confirming we have received your observation. If there are problems, please follow the instructions on screen.</p>

### How long do I have to complete the uploader process?

There is **no time limit** to complete the uploader process. However, if you close the page and leave the process, you will have to start again from the beginning.

### Do I pay the fee when I upload the document?

Yes. You will need a debit or credit card to pay the necessary fee. Please make sure that you have enough money in your account as payment will be taken at the same time as you upload your document.

### **Can I upload the document and pay the fee separately?**

No. If you are using the uploader, you can only pay by debit or credit card. If you wish to pay the fee by any other payment method, you will need to either:

- send us your observation by post, or
- hand deliver it to a member of staff in our office.

### **Do I have to use the uploader to send in my observation?**

No. You can continue to send your observation by post or deliver it in person to our office. More details are available on page 22.

### **Can I use the uploader to submit my observation and post supporting materials?**

No. If you want to include supporting materials such as printed photographs, paper drawings, or DVDs as part of your observation, you will need to send your observation by post or deliver it in person to our office.

### **Can I use the uploader and post a paper copy of the same observation?**

No. Please only use **one** method to send your observation, online by the uploader **or** in paper (by the post or deliver in person).

### **I am having problems using the uploader. Who can I contact?**

If you are having problems using the uploader, please contact our helpdesk by emailing [onlinesupport@pleanala.ie](mailto:onlinesupport@pleanala.ie)

### **Will you contact me during the application process by email?**

No. During the application process, we will write to you by letter sent in the post. You will only receive an email from us to confirm that we have received your observation document.

## Sending us the observation by post or delivering it in person

### Where do I send or deliver my observation?

You can:

- post it to:

Strategic Housing Unit, An Bord Pleanála,  
64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01 V902,



or

- deliver it in person to a member of An Bord Pleanála staff at our office in Marlborough Street (address above) during office hours – Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 5.30pm. Please note that the security staff in our office cannot accept observations.



or

- put it into the letterbox at our office outside office hours.



Remember, do **not** place your observation in the letterbox of our office and **do not** email it to us as your observation will be **invalid**.

We are closed on weekends, public holidays and other publicised days such as Christmas Day and Good Friday.

### Can I get a receipt if I deliver my observation in person?

Yes. If you deliver your observation in person to our office, you can ask for a **receipt** which says that we have received your observation. When your observation is handed to a member of An Bord Pleanála staff, we cannot return it nor can we make a photocopy of your documents with our date stamp. A receipt does not mean that your observation is valid. We will write to you separately to tell you if your observation is valid or invalid.

## After you make your observation

### Have I made a valid or invalid observation?

After we receive your observation, we will check that it meets the statutory requirements to be a valid observation. If your observation does not meet these requirements, it is invalid. Next, we will send you a letter to tell you that we have:

- received your observation, and
- found your observation to be valid **or** invalid.

### What do I need to do next if my observation is valid?

If your observation is valid, you do not need to do anything else at this point. During the application process, if we write to you, please follow the instructions or advice in the letter. If you need help following the instructions or advice, you can [contact us](#). Please quote the **case reference number** on the letter, so we can identify your case.

### What happens if my observation is invalid?

If your observation is invalid, we will return all your documents to you as soon as we can. We will refund your fee by cheque to the postal address you have given us. You can re-submit the observation only if you can fully meet all the statutory requirements. For example, if you want to make your observation again, you will need to make sure that this is within the five-week period to make an observation. We cannot accept late observations for any reason.

### Why is my observation invalid?

The observation is invalid as it does not fully meet all the statutory requirements as described in this guide such as:

- it is received outside of the five-week time period allowed to make an observation,
- it does not include the required fee.

### What does An Bord Pleanála do next?

An inspector will consider your observation and all documents on the application case file. They will [visit the site](#) of the proposed development to gather more information and take photographs for their report. The inspector may wish to see the site from your property. If this is the case, we may contact you to make arrangements for the site visit.

After the site visit, the inspector prepares a report and recommendation for the Board. The Board will then make a decision based on all the documents on the case.

### What is the time limit for deciding applications?

The Board has a statutory objective to try to decide cases **within 16 weeks**. This period will not be extended unless an oral hearing is held.

When the Board makes a decision, we will send you a letter and a copy of the Board Order to let you know the decision. More information about the [Board's decision](#) is available on our website.

### Can I withdraw my observation?

Yes, you can withdraw your observation any time before a decision is made. You **must** write to us and state that you wish to withdraw your observation. We cannot refund your fee.

### Will the Board still consider my observation if the applicant has withdrawn their application?

No. If the applicant withdraws their application, there are no longer any observations to consider.

### Can the Board dismiss an observation?

Yes. The Board can dismiss an observation where it is satisfied that the observation is:

- **vexatious**: intended only to annoy or disturb,
- **frivolous**: lacking in seriousness,
- **without substance or foundation**,
- **made just to delay** the development,
- **made to secure the payment** of money, gifts and considerations by anybody, or
- **made by a person who cannot be identified** (in the Board's opinion).

### Where can I find out more information on the strategic housing development process?

You can find further information in our [Section 4 Applications to An Bord Pleanála: Guidance for the Public](#) guide and other information on our website <https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/shd-applications-general-public-guidance>

## Frequently asked questions

### **Can I make an anonymous observation?**

No. You must provide your name and full address when making your observation.

### **Can I get proof that I made an observation?**

Yes. If you use the online uploader facility, you will get a receipt by email. If you visit our office to deliver your observation in person, we can give you a receipt that we have received it. This receipt does not confirm that your observation is valid. We do not provide a photocopy of your observation documents with our date stamp on them.

### **Can you accept a late observation?**

No. The law does not allow us to accept a late observation for any reason.

### **Why is the observation invalid even though I posted it on time?**

Your observation is invalid as although you may have posted it on time, we did not receive it within the required time period of five weeks from the date An Bord Pleanála receives the application.

### **Can I email or fax an observation and send the fee in the post?**

No. To make a valid observation, you need to post us all the documents required and the appropriate fee. They must arrive together before the close of the five-week period.

### **What happens if my observation is invalid?**

If your observation is invalid, we will return your documents and fee.

### **An Bord Pleanála has returned my invalid observation. Can I re-submit the observation?**

Yes, but only if you can fully meet all the requirements as described in this document, then you may make your observation again.

### **Can I send additional information after I have made my observation?**

No. You cannot give us additional information after you have made your observation.

### **Can I be sued for what I write in my observation?**

Yes, you could be sued. To avoid this, you should refer only to relevant planning issues. Defamation is when a person communicates false statements about another person that injure that person's reputation. Our notice on [defamation](#) explains more at <https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/defamation>

## Legislation

The laws and regulations referred to in this document are:

- [Planning and Development \(Housing\) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016](#),
- [Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended](#),
- [Planning and Development \(Strategic Housing Development\) Regulations 2017, as amended](#).

## Contact us

If you want a copy of this document in a different format or if you need more information, please contact An Bord Pleanála.

<b>Email us at:</b>	<a href="mailto:strategichousing@pleanala.ie">strategichousing@pleanala.ie</a>
<b>Visit our website at:</b>	<a href="https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/strategic-housing-development">https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/strategic-housing-development</a>
<b>Write to us at:</b> <b>Visit our offices at:</b>	Strategic Housing Unit An Bord Pleanála 64 Marlborough Street Dublin 1 D01 V902
<b>Telephone us on:</b>	(01) 858 8100 or LoCall: 1800 275 175
<b>Send us a fax on:</b>	(01) 872 2684

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