

To whom it may concern,

I wish to formally object to the criteria set out in the draft County development plan. For someone being a native of the area, I find it completely unfair that the Louth County Council believe they get to decide how and where we live our lives. This plan would displace an entire native population who would traditionally build and live on family owned land beside grandparents, parents, siblings, cousins, and friends, which this plan would effectively end. Families have lived here for generations through good times and hard times and have stayed here and built up and contributed to the community and now face the prospect of being uprooted from generational land. One off housing is a requirement that ensures that communities survive, and strict regulations will damage the social fabric of rural areas and threaten traditional settlement.

Specifically what considerations have been given to the potential isolation of the ever growing elderly population and the positive impact that having family close by has on their ever growing needs, especially giving them longer periods in their own family homes and stops them being an early burden on the health services and social services. This has been a personal experience and the benefits of same apparent.

What consideration has been given to the potential impact on the mental health of future generations that will have no other options but to leave family and friends and their community to relocate to urban areas?

The ongoing debate on rural housing in the countryside has focused upon the unsustainability of settlement patterns, aesthetic damage, and possible pollution from septic tanks. Concerns over cost and service provision have been paramount in arguments against the sustainability of settlement patterns. While this is a legitimate concern, there are several complex issues involving local ties, kinship and traditional settlement patterns which cannot be ignored. These issues need to be studied before any drastic action is taken in relation to local housing needs. The argument against one off housing septic tank damage has yet little scientific evidence to back it up. Research is needed on how much pollution is being caused by septic tanks and the ability of natural systems to absorb discharge.

Not enough has been done to emphasize the sustainability factors associated with the houses themselves regardless of location or settlement patterns. If sustainability is truly a goal here, then there must be some practical steps that can be taken. Why not concentrate on some real tangible short-term goals? These goals could focus on sustainable housing and materials and be strictly enforced while educating people on the long term benefits to them and their children. Subsidisation for sustainable practice could be introduced into the housing process. While the sustainability of rural areas is the concern of all involved, the development versus environment debate continues to drive communities into unnecessary counterproductive splinter groups. If future policy is to be successful it must deal with the multitude of issues affecting rural housing in an integrated way. Without a holistic approach, pressure upon rural housing will remain a predominant feature in this area. Even with a holistic approach, there is a need to strictly monitor and enforce regulations, which not only protect the natural but also the social environment of rural areas. Going forward it is my opinion that current local needs policies should be revised with restrictions focusing on the type of one-off housing that is being built. If these concerns are not addressed the sustainability of these rural communities and their ability to become a vibrant sustainable community will be in serious jeopardy.

Also what steps have been taken to study

- The level of 2nd home ownership, uses of 2nd homes and the motivations and merits for second homeownership.
- The role of developers in the locality in relation to land use & political donations.
- The development and implementation of sustainable housing models.
- Land transfer and the quantity of sites being sold -to whom and for what purpose

Going forward it is my opinion that current local needs policies should be revised with restrictions focusing on the type of one-off housing that is being built and with consideration continuing to be given to local needs for all families that are natives to the area. Respect for planning policy makers, planners and councilors is in a vulnerable state and an opinion has been created that more value is being placed on the area itself rather than the people that live within it.

Kind regards,

Owen and Ciara Connolly