

Parish of Carlingford & Omeath

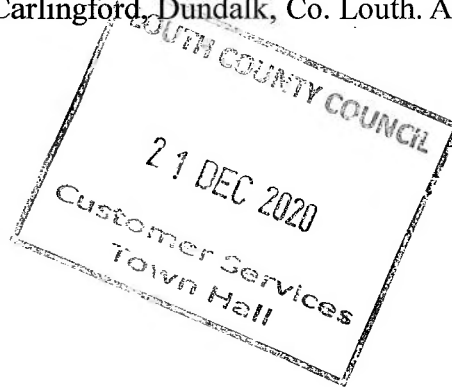
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Forward Planning Unit
Development Plan Review
Louth County Council
Dundalk



16th December 2020

To whom it concerns,

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 St Laurence's Hall Omeath (Old Foresters Hall) Folio LH 2703

I write on behalf of the Parish of Carlingford and Omeath, to ask that the St Laurence's Hall (Foresters Hall) in Omeath be included in the list of protected structures in the 2021 to 2027 County Development Plan.

I do so because of the historic nature of the building and its important role in the Gaelic Revival movement of the early 20th century.

The enclosed documents provide support for the funding application made recently to the Heritage Council, but for the purpose of this Submission, underscore the importance of the building and the consequent case for its protection.

The Parish would look forward to working with the Conservation and Heritage officers in Louth County Council as well as local stakeholders in the village to save and restore the building and we see this as being an important first step.



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

TO: THE HERITAGE COUNCIL GRANT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Support for the application to conserve the Foresters' Hall in Omeath

This letter is confirmation that the Heritage Office of Louth County Council fully supports the efforts of Omeath District Development, on behalf of the local community in Omeath, to conserve and bring back into beneficial, social use the former Forester's Hall in Omeath. This is a vital project to support the local community by restoring a historic building in the village centre and also to dovetail with major public sector efforts to improve the village's appearance. Omeath is located a few hundred metres from the Border.

Louth County Council is currently developing a major Public Realm enhancement project for Omeath, based partly on a Village Design Statement prepared with the support of the Heritage Council in 2013. It is also proposed to develop a new, cross-border Greenway, linking Omeath to Newry and on, via the Newry Canal, to Lough Neagh. While the Forester's Hall is not within the envelope of either Council project, its conservation would contribute to improving the look of Omeath in an essential way.

The hall is on a very prominent site right in the middle of the village and is currently in poor condition. Local people have obtained the agreement of the local parish priest that the hall can be conserved, something that I and local people have been crying out for for a long time.

The hall is an important historical location. Omeath was the site of the last surviving Gaeltacht on the east coast and saw the established of the very first Irish summer college, Coláiste Bhríde, in 1912. Thanks to its convenient access through the railway system and location roughly halfway between Belfast and Dublin, the Omeath Irish college rapidly became very well-known and widely emulated. The very first Irish language direction signage was erected in Omeath. Significant figures in the Irish language and national movements spent time at the Omeath college, which, for part of its existence, was located in this very hall.

I know that the funds will be heavily over-subscribed with applications but this is a project with not just local or county but also national relevance. Coláiste Bhríde was relocated to Rann na Feirsde in Tír Chonaill in 1927, as the Omeath Gaeltacht continued to decline. Young people from Louth still travel there each summer, to conserve the language that once rang out within the walls of this hall and in surrounding fields, hills and lanes. I urge you to consider this application favourably.

Louth Heritage officer

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Cuirfeair fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras Gaeilge - Correspondence in Irish is welcome



OPW

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nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

Musaem na bPiarsach
Páirc Naomh Éanna
Rath Fearnáin
Baile Átha Cliath 16
Éire

Pearse Museum
St. Enda's Park
Grange Road
Rathfarnham
Dublin 16

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Mr. Mark Dearey
Omeath District Development Company
Omeath
Co. Louth

14 September, 2020

Dear Mr. Dearey,

I am writing to you to lend my support to the proposal of the Omeath Development Company to preserve and renovate the Foresters Hall in Omeath, the original home of Coláiste Bhríde Oméith. As someone who has written about P. H. Pearse and cared for the Pearse Museum collection for nearly twenty years, I am particularly interested in its connection with him and of course the wider Irish language revival movement at the turn of the twentieth century. As the last native Irish-speaking area in Leinster, Omeath has a unique place in the history of the language. The foundation of the college there in 1912 was very significant development in the Gaelic League's efforts to revive the language. As one of the most prominent and active members of that movement, P.H. Pearse was a great supporter of this project, and our collection contains some wonderful images of one of the visits he paid to Omeath with his brother William and a number of other prominent Gaelic Leaguers.

I imagine Omeath, and its linguistic heritage, was particularly important to Pearse because of its association with Ireland's mythic past and, in particular, the Cuchulainn sagas. Pearse used Cuchulainn as an exemplar for his pupils when he founded his own school, Scoil Éanna. In Pearse's eyes, the Cooley peninsula's connection with the story of Cuchulainn would have made it a uniquely inspirational place to learn the Irish language and connect with Irish culture. Pearse set great store by way in which the experience of being in an historic landscape could connect a person to its past.

One of the principal reasons he moved his own school to the property which now house the Pearse Museum in Rathfarnham was its association with the revolutionary hero, Robert Emmet. Similarly, I feel that a sensitive restoration of Forester's Hall will offer people a powerful and tangible link to the rich history of the Omeath Gaeltacht.

The story of the Gaelic League and their efforts to save the language at the turn of the century is often over-shadowed by the subsequent political and revolutionary events of the 1916-23 period. Not enough is known about this really remarkable grass-roots movement which was based in communities all around Ireland and fuelled by the enthusiasm of local people. I therefore feel it is particularly appropriate that this project is being spear-headed by the people of Omeath and a community-based organisation like yours. I would therefore would be honoured to add my voice in support your efforts and wish you every success in your application for Heritage Council funding.

