



Collon Community Together - submission to Louth County Council Draft Development Plan 2021 – 2027

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Collon Community Together is a village development association established by residents of Collon Village in 2020. Our goal is to revitalise our village structurally, economically and socially. We feel Collon has been long neglected and hope to be a voice for the villagers and those living in the locality. We aim to achieve our goals in conjunction with and guided by the County Development Plan.

We set out this submission in the hope of working closely with Louth County Council to facilitate the revitalisation and improvement of our unique historical and scenic village.

1. Road Safety

Collon is, as noted in the Draft Development Plan, a historic model village. Collon existed long before its main street was designated a National Primary Road (N2), however the village has become dominated by the constant, dangerous traffic, particularly from HGVs. We are pleased to note Policy Objective Col 16 of the Draft Development Plan:

“To promote and facilitate the upgrade and development of footpaths as well as traffic calming measures which increase pedestrian priority and improve road safety”.

However we note that improved traffic management, improved access for pedestrians and cyclists and improved pavements were also a core objective of the 2015 – 2020 Development Plan.

While we acknowledge the improvements to Drogheda Street, we note ongoing issues around the junction with School Lane due to the lack of car parking at the school. Issues include congestion at drop off and collection times on Drogheda Street, congestion around the entrance to the Old Rectory estate and dangerous sight lines when exiting School Lane. We note the recent serious

accident on Drogheda Street during school collection time. We request that adequate car parking for the school be included as an objective in the Development Plan.

We request that road safety improvements on the N2 are given the utmost priority going forward, particularly with regard to the dangerous N2/Kells Road junction, the poor road and pavement surfaces and the near-constant speeding through the village. We request that Policy Objective Col 16 be amended to read:

“To carry out traffic calming measures on the N2 at Collon as part of an overall traffic management strategy aimed at prioritising pedestrians and cyclists”.

We note with disappointment that Chapter 7 “Movement” of the Draft Development Plan makes no mention of improvements to road safety in Collon. We note Policy Objective MOV 41:

“To seek to examine, in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the feasibility of progressing and delivering the N2 bypass of Ardee Town.”

We note that with a proposed Slane bypass and proposed Ardee bypass, Collon would be the last unbypassed village on the N2 National Route. We note despite discussion of a feasibility study for Collon Bypass as far back as 2007 this has never been completed. The issues facing people living and working in Collon arising from its position on the N2 are equal to those of Ardee and Slane, and, accordingly, a bypass for Collon must be prioritised in the new Plan. MOV 41 must be amended to read:

*“To seek to examine, in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the feasibility of progressing and delivering the N2 bypass of Ardee Town **and Collon.**”*

2. Economic Development

We welcome Policy Objective Col 4:

“To ensure that the village centre is the priority location for new commercial, retail and mixed use developments thereby creating opportunities to live, work and shop within the village and reduce the need to travel by private car.”

And Policy Objective Col 5:

“To encourage the return of vacant buildings in the village centre to uses which complement the existing scale and character of the settlement.”

However we note that Policy Objective Col 4 of the 2015 – 2021 Plan, to promote the improvement of the environment of the village centre, has not come to fruition. We would urge that priority is given to the revitalisation of the village centre and look forward to working with the Council in this regard. We also note that several of the protected structures identified in the Draft Plan and previous Plans are derelict. We would urge the Council to make the preservation of these structures a priority.

We note Policy Objective Col 6:

“To promote and facilitate the provision of a range of employment opportunities on lands zoned for general employment.”

While we acknowledge the importance of employment opportunities local to the village, we draw the Council’s attention to the existing underutilised business park to the South of the village on the N2. We would urge that priority is given to utilising existing vacant commercial space on zoned lands rather than encouraging unwelcome development on the residential Kells Road to the west of the village.

3. Public realm

The Draft County Development Plan incorrectly states that Collon has a community centre. Collon has a village hall which is seldom in use due to infrastructural issues. Collon Community Together looks forward to working with the Council on the upgrading of the village hall to enable it to work as a fully fledged community centre in line with Policy Objective Col 10:

“To support existing public, community and sporting facilities and the provision of any additional facilities.”

We welcome the project’s inclusion in table 7.1 “public realm projects to be progressed during this plan”.

We welcome Objective Col 11:

“To support the progression and delivery of social and community projects including the identification of a suitable site for a play park.”

We believe the village is in dire need of a playground and has been for many years. Collon Community Together are actively working towards this goal. We request that Objective Col 11 read:

“To support the progression and delivery of social and community projects including the identification of a suitable site and construction of a play park.”

4. Tourism/recreation

We welcome Objective Col 7 and 8 in relation to the development of tourism and heritage trails and Objective Col 13 and 14 in relation to the development of walking and cycling trails, including adjacent to the River Mattock. We believe the development of any such amenities must be approached in conjunction with our road safety concerns highlighted at paragraph 1 above.

5. Biodiversity and Natural Heritage

Collon has an unusually high number of mature tree specimens due in part to its history as a model estate village. We believe our woodland is integral to Collon’s character and scenic amenity. We welcome Objective Col 20:

“To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees including those identified on the Composite Map and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.”

However we note that while the previous Development Plan identified candidate tree preservation orders, it appears these were not granted. No individual candidate tree preservation orders appear on the current Draft Development Plan Composite Map, nor on the SEA environmental report, see fig. 4.18. This may be an oversight and we request clarity.

We note that while the woodlands of New Mellifont Abbey are identified as a proposed Natural Heritage Area, these mature and valuable woodlands are unmanaged and extensively overgrown with invasive cherry laurel. We urge that the surveying and management of these woodlands be made a priority. We believe that our relaunched Tidy Towns Committee may be able to assist in the preservation and management of this area in conjunction with the Council in accordance with Appendix 8, Green Infrastructure Strategy.

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