

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

Lillian O'Reilly []

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To: LouthCDP

To whom it may concern,

I am shocked that at the age of 20, I am here writing this in worry that I will not be able to build and live where I grew up. The place I was raised and brought up in. I am writing this submission in objection to the proposed Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, Chapter 3 on Rural Housing.

I currently live in zone 1 of this Development Plan for 2021-2027. It is the place where my father, grandparents and many other generations of my family before me were born and lived all their lives. My parents, grandparents and many of the past generations of my family were afforded the right to build their own homes just a stone throw away from where they grew up. They got to grow families in the beautiful surroundings that they were raised in. Something that I now might not be allowed to do. My parents building so close to their home houses meant that I got to live beside my grandparents, and I got the luxury of growing up with them beside me. The proximity of our houses gave great comfort for my grandparents in knowing that my parents were there to look after them once they got older and needed it, something that past generations always did. If the qualifying criteria in zone 1 comes in, I will not be able to build in Glenmore when I grow up. The next generation of my family will not get to live beside their grandparents, and I will not be there to care for my own parents once they become elderly. I struggle to understand how my friends and their families in zone 2 seem more important than that of my own in zone 1 as they can build and reside beside their parents if they have lived in the area for at least 18 years of their life and have the opportunity to care for their parents. I have lived in Glenmore for more than 18 years in my life but if this plan comes into play, I will not be able to live beside my home house but my friends who live in zone 2 can. Can you tell me that this is fair? Just because I am seen to have a better 'view', do you think that you can strip all my planning rights away from me? This is totally discriminatory against me and my generation. This will completely drive out us away from our localities and probably our home country if we cannot live beside our loved ones.

I have deep concerns over this plan. As a resident of a rural area in Louth, I want to know why I have not been consulted on the major changes in this plan. I feel like this plan is completely unfair. I struggle to understand the extremely limited qualifying criteria in zone 1. I can say that I fully believe that this plan is completely discriminatory against families that have members of it that have a disability. I am one of those families. In the future, if I must provide care, I will not be given permission to build beside their house. If there is no one else that is able bodied to provide that care, which may I add is looking very obvious considering this plan will create rural isolation and a complete depopulation of the North Louth area and the house cannot be modified or extended to allow me to care for them, it will effectively mean that I will not be able to care for them. I worry as to what will happen at this time then. This makes it completely unfair on me and many others in North Louth. I am shocked that I even have to stand up for myself in this. The developers of this plan need to discuss this plan with the people affected and come up with a solution that we both are happy with. Our voices must be heard, and you must allow us to come up with what we believe is a fair and equal plan in regard to rural housing, chapter 3 of this plan. After all, we are the ones who have lived in these areas for generations and generations and we cannot be put out of that. I cannot stress enough how unfair it is that the people of rural Louth who are being forced to move to an urban area because of the criteria in this development plan.

I am shocked that you all are prepared to allow this plan to go ahead considering we are living through a global pandemic. The restrictions on meetings is preventing the public from being able to fully discuss the real detrimental consequences of putting this plan in place. The exceptional circumstances of this should be used as a sole reason for the postponement of this plan, followed by a full consultation and full complete input by everyone. I am aware that this plan must come into effect under law, however, if it is not being agreed by the public, you must not allow it to go ahead. The responsibility of this plan lies in your hands. The Council represents the interests of the people, however, if this plan is agreed upon now, it will be living proof that you are ignoring our requests, my requests. You know that the people in Louth, especially in the North of Louth do not agree

with this plan. How could we? It is going to completely drive us away from our families. Do not blow this over. Recognise it, acknowledge it and postpone this plan until the public are fully consulted and a combined agreement is met that meets the needs of the people in these two zones. We want to work with the Council on this. However, the restrictive qualifying criteria in both zone 1 and zone 2 that you approved for the draft plan that was published makes me very much believe that my voice and the voice of the next generation is not being heard. Not only this but it makes me believe that the Louth Council are leaving my generation behind.

Also, the draft plan should be postponed because of the Flemish Decree case from the European Court of Justice. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government have not yet issued any guidelines on this. So there is no knowledge of what effect these guidelines will have on this plan.

The communities in rural Ireland are often used to show the best of our country. This Rural Housing section of this development plan will destroy this. This plan has caused such anxiety and worry for people regarding their futures, mine included. The Council need to sit down with the people of Louth by going to each community, sports club, school and family concerned to listen to their concerns and work with them. This Rural Housing section of this plan will displace an entire population in rural Ireland. I am deeply disturbed by the long-term effects of this. There is nothing sustainable in my view about what will be a waste in taxpayer's money that is used to fund rural schools and communities. Millions of euros have been invested in rural schools and if this plan comes into effect, it will completely depopulate the area forcing the closure of rural schools. This plan will affect sports clubs almost instantly from the decline in registered members as well as businesses from the fall in demand. Memberships is one of a sports club's main incomes and are an essential part in keeping a club open and in the long run, it will ensure an inevitable closure of sports clubs. These places are at the absolute heart of rural communities. Why do you think it is acceptable to strip it away from us?

The internal structure of a rural community is one like no other. The friendships between neighbours and support that they give to one another make the North Louth community such a tight knit one and one that should not be abolished because we know that if you approve of the conditions in this plan, it will abolish this sense of community in the future. Why should I and many others like me in north Louth who have lived here since we were born, played in many of the local sports clubs and studied in the local schools be told that we have not got an option to live beside where we grew up when we are older?

The Rural Housing section in Chapter 3 of this plan does not allow for the free movement of people. So, it does not respect the housing needs of its people. If you are going to determine if someone can live in their area, you should in the least have the respect to listen to these people's concerns and let them have a fair input in the developments of this plan. After all, you are meant to be here to work with us, not against us. This Louth County Development Plan, Chapter 3 on Rural Housing, must not mean that people of Louth are not allowed to live where they grew up.

If this Rural Housing section of this plan is enacted, it will have huge social, economic and cultural implications on families, communities and on our schools and sporting organisations. A study must be undertaken to analyse the implications that this plan would have on families and communities. I worry that this was never even considered. You simple cannot expect people to be told they can't live were they grew up and not have undertaken a study like this before implementing the Rural Housing section of this plan.

This plan will also cause devastation in families as you are asking them to choose what two of their children are going to have the right to build on their land. I am confused in regard to the motive behind this. I am asking you to lift this. Allow all children of a landowner to be given land. I am also confused as to your rationale behind a landowner who has a minimum of 3 hectares and having owned it for a minimum of 10 years. If any landowner has land, they should have the right to decide what they want to do with it and not be restrictive as to only being able to give it to two of their children. I can't stress it enough that this plan is unjust and biased towards women in Louth due to the fact that the majority of farms are handed over to the sons in many families. This reduces the chances of women being entitled to land.

I worry for my future and that of everyone my age in county Louth if this plan goes ahead. This plan will cause rising house prices and rising prices on land in zone 2. Do you recognise that in this day and age, we are already facing high rental and buying costs? It is laughable that you want to approve of a plan that will only worsen this issue. Young people are struggling to live in Ireland as it is. It is only adding financial strain and worry to us younger people. I find it completely unfair that I am even having to write this. As the Council who is meant to act as a representative, informed and responsible decision-maker in the interests of the people of Louth, you must not allow this to happen as it will affect the majority of people in Louth. You must recognise this and take action to stop it. If you allow the Rural Housing section of this plan to go ahead, you will be completely ignoring the concerns of everyone that is worried about this plan.

I urge you all to come together and listen to our submissions and worries. I ask for time on this matter. We need to work together to improve the quality of life in Louth, not to disintegrate it. Let's help the young people in the community who live in rural areas and not to make it impossible to allow them to live where they came from and beside their loved ones. This plan will ruin many people's future dreams. Please come together to allow all the people that grew up in the community to live where they were born and raised. Give us all a fair and equal chance to live in our own homes beside our families, friends and neighbours. No amount of words or submissions can express how serious the implications of the Rural Housing section of this plan will be. This is why I urge you to postpone the implementation of the Rural Housing section of this plan and come together and discuss with the people in each townland in Louth and accommodate to our needs.

Lillian O'Reilly.

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