

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

We wish to have the curtilage area around Smarmore Castle made exempt from policy objectives BHC 15, BHC 16, BHC 17 (pg. 9-15) and BHC33 (pg 9-24) of the proposed development plan on the grounds that:

The section has been ignored in at least three planning applications during the period of the 2015-2021 plan (see application numbers: 17151, 17894 and 19569) and is not relevant to the needs of the local community nor a risk to the protected structure of Smarmore Castle or its grounds.

The application of these sections will adversely disadvantaged vulnerable residents of the area who wish to build their own homes and live in a rural community close to a well-established network of family and support.

Background

During the period from 1995 to 2013, my family ran an accommodation and leisure business in Smarmore Castle. In 2016, after the business had closed, the property and lands around it were sold. We, who were both at retirement age at the time, applied to build a modest bungalow on some lands we owned adjacent to the castle's grounds.

Our application (16137) passed all the structural, environmental, roads and residential aspects of planning but was turned down because the planner felt that it would contravene policies HER 33, HER 34, HER 35 and HER 55 of the 2015-2021 Development plan. These policies related to protected structures and gardens in the county. During our time in Smarmore Castle we took steps to restore, preserve and protect the historic building so had no intention of doing anything after we left to harm it. Our proposed residence was in the "curtilage" of Smarmore Castle (based on a map of the castle's estate from 1836 to 1846) when the grounds were around a hundred acres and not the ten or so as they are now. In the proposed development plan, Smarmore is listed in Table 9.5 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (pg. 9-22) based on details from the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) website. However, NIAH currently outlines that there are no formal gardens, avenues, vistas or garden of note remaining.

In addition, planning has been granted during the period of the last plan to a number of residential, commercial and farming applications within this "curtilage". These have included the building of a house (17151), the expansion of the accommodation in the grounds of the castle (17894) and the approval of a site for the dumping of imported soil and stone material in a large field next to castle (19569). We have no objection to the granting of any of these as they take into account the actual needs of the local community and the efforts of a local business to get established. The planners who looked at these applications at the time took the same view. However, it is unfair and inconsistent that our application did not have the same considerations applied to it as the other applicants.

We request that the "curtilage area" around Smarmore Castle be exempt from the list of areas to which the sections outlined above apply.

Senders:

Peter and Eileen Mullen