

Louth County Council,
Millennium Centre,
Saint Alphonsus Road,
Dundalk,
Co. Louth

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make the following submission in relation to the County Development Plan 2021-2027.

I wish to object in the strongest terms to the proposed "Rural Housing Strategy".

If this proposed plan goes ahead in its current form, our rural communities will suffer. The restrictions on rural one-off houses in the draft CDP will mean few, if any new houses will be built in these areas, resulting in the decline of surrounding parishes and communities. The falling population will undoubtedly result in the loss and downgrading of existing amenities. Our post offices, shops, pubs, sports teams, churches, schools and all other local services and amenities will be at severe risk.

The plan spells out clearly how the council intends to restrict housing development in rural areas by only approving permissions for "one-off housing" to very specific categories of people; those engaged in agriculture and rural enterprises and who have ties to that local area. The strict implementation of the policy will severely affect many local rural communities.

I believe Louth County Council need to put in place a policy that facilitates the settlement of local people in their own local community who are not actively engaged in farming. There are many other categories of people from a local area that should be facilitated with housing in their community. For example:

- People who are originally from the local area but are not involved in farming or a rural enterprise.
- People who may have left the area previously for employment or other reasons and have now returned.
- People who are intrinsically involved in their community.
- People who are involved in community/sporting organisations in the area.
- People from the area who cannot afford to purchase houses in urban areas.

There is a need for the local authority to make better and realistic accommodations for the non-farming families/persons that currently reside in rural Louth and who are intrinsically connected with their local communities. If the current draft of the Louth county development Plan is adopted in its current form, it will have hugely negative impact on rural communities,

like Clogherhead, Cooley, Carlingford, Togher, Castlebellingham, Annagassan, Dromiskin, Stabannon and Knockbridge to name but a few.

These small villages are currently sustained and enriched by the local community that lives both in the villages and the large rural hinterland that surrounds them. Any change that would occur would only seek to diminish and damage the existing services and indeed the numerous community and voluntary groups.

Ultimately, the proposal to strictly restrict development in rural areas of the county to those involved in farming or rural enterprises will devastate our rural communities.

Other issues which will arise if this draft plan goes through:

- **Two Categories of Life in Rural Areas:** this is not acceptable as many residents of Rural Louth have been born and raised in the rural areas but are not from farming backgrounds or are not actively farming. These people should not be forced out of the area due to Rural residents being classed on farming life.
- **School Development:** The draft plan eliminates any possibility of development of rural schools. Areas of land surrounding schools have been designated for limited residential development therefore leaving no room for necessary expansion or, indeed in a lot of areas, adequate facilities.
- **Care of Elderly/Home Care:** The draft plan will mean that younger generations will have no choice other than to live in urban areas, whether villages/towns etc, therefore leaving no family members living close to their homesteads to be available to provide necessary care to elderly family members. This is an area already in complete crisis as our government is unable to provide necessary care to these people which will in turn only get drastically worse if younger generations are not in the locality to help.
- Rural families have, for generations cared for and looked after "Rural Ireland" a very intricate part of our Irish heritage which we are known for all over the world. This draft plan is now prioritising the over-development of towns and villages at the expense of rural families.
- **GAA & Local Clubs/Societies:** This plan will cause the disintegration of all local clubs & societies due to future generations all living in urban areas.

I would respectfully ask you not to adopt this draft plan in its current form and to please make provisions for local people to continue to live, work and grow up in the communities they love and nurture.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth McNally