

Submission on Draft Louth County Development Plan

From Councillors Butler, Doyle & Smith

This submission pertains to the zoning of lands to the South of Louth County Hospital in Dundalk at the rear of Bayview House, Dublin Road. The site is approximately 6.42 acres in size.

At a meeting of Louth County Council on 1st October, 2020 for the purpose of making the draft plan it was agreed to change the zoning on this site from A1 Existing Residential to G1 Community Facilities. A number of sites in Dundalk subsequently changed to A1 Existing Residential from their respective zonings (H1 Open Space, L1 Strategic Reserve and C1 Mixed Use – these sites are located at Hoey's Lane, Mounthamilton on Carrickmacross Road and beside the Railway Bridge at Castletown Road.

We propose that the 6.42 acre site beside the Louth County Hospital revert back to A1 Existing Residential and as a result that the other sites are no longer zoned A1 Existing Residential and that they revert to H1, L1 and C1.

We make this proposal in the interest of proper planning and sustainable development. The site beside the hospital was purchased by the HSE in 2004 at a cost of €2,439,600. A freedom of information request from Councillor Anne Campbell dated 23rd July, 2018 stated that the "The HSE has no specific plans for this site at present due to its location it remains strategically important to the HSE".

In light of the public housing crisis and the acknowledgement of the need to build more public housing on public land, it would seem regressive to take this option away in respect of this piece of land without the HSE actively requesting it or having engaged directly with the council's development plan process. Also this site may be of interest to the Land Development Agency. The Land Development Agency (LDA) is a commercial, State-sponsored body that has been created to coordinate land within State control for more optimal uses where appropriate, with a focus on the provision of housing – unlocking state land for new homes. The HSE could be accused of land hoarding as they have done nothing with this site for over sixteen years, when we are experiencing a housing crisis and when it has been shown that developing houses on public lands can be significantly more economical.

While it is not required, we believe it is appropriate for the HSE to make their own submission with regard to their future intentions for this significant site and to consult with the forward planning unit of Louth County Council about whether a change of zoning is actually required in this instance.

The A1 Existing Residential zoning under Generally Permitted Use allows for Community Facility, Nursing Home, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation Healthcare Practitioner is also an "Open for Consideration".

The A1 Existing Residential zoning is compatible with a number of healthcare and community related options as stated above.