

Re: Proposed Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

I wish to make a submission in relation to the proposed Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

I would like to object to the proposed changes to rural development in the north of the county, whereby it seeks to re-zone Ravensdale and its surrounding areas so that only occupational farmers and those with large land holdings can build in the area.

These changes stand to discriminate against local people who were born and raised in these communities and who seek to build and live there, but who are not full time occupational farmers or do not own large amounts of land. It is not right or just that people should be denied the same opportunity afforded to other areas to build and live in their own communities, close to all of their family and friends.

If passed, this plan stands to decimate the population of the re-zoned areas, which will also have detrimental effects on local school enrolment numbers, local gaa and soccer clubs and local shops, pubs, restaurants and businesses. Furthermore, it has the potential to isolate those who live in the areas as years go by and no new people are moving into the area. It also stands to isolate the people who are forced to move out of the area and into communities where they know nobody and are away from their family and friends.

As the council is aware, there is currently a housing shortage on both a national and local level. This in turn has led to decreased supply and increased price of houses and rents. The result of these conditions, coupled with the lasting effects of the economic crash of 2008 and COVID-19, has meant that young people are finding it ever more difficult to get on the property ladder.

If this proposal was to be passed, not only does it conflict with the current plans and objectives of Government, but it would lead to a greater demand for housing in urban areas and therefore a further rise in house prices, taking home ownership out of reach of many people who would have been previously able to afford building on their own land.

Therefore, I would like to propose that any new development plan reflects the needs of both local communities and that of the current national interests. I would like to see the proposed changes to rural area development scrapped and replaced by incentivised plans which help, not hinder, people to achieve their goals of home ownership in their own local areas.

COVID-19 has also changed the way in which people now live and work. There is a growing trend of people starting to work from home, which is a positive as it greatly reduces traffic on roads and therefore reduces carbon emissions. It also allows for a greater quality of life due to more time spent at home and less time spent commuting to workplaces.

As a result, house sizes and floor layouts will need to be reviewed to allow for extra space in new dwellings for home offices, storage, etc. Therefore, I would like to propose that permissible dwelling floor areas be increased to reflect these growing needs.

Also, I would like to request that the following policy from the current plan not be included in the proposed new development plan:

*“Policy SS54 – To preserve a clear break of a minimum of 300 metres between the boundary of existing settlements and any permitted development along adjoin roads”.*

This policy stands to hinder those who have land holdings within these areas and who wish to build and live in their communities. I object to this policy on the same grounds as mentioned above in relation to the current housing shortage and need for new houses.