

Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027: Submission by Ruth O Hanlon

Ruth O Hanlon []

Sent: 23 December 2020 10:46

To: LouthCDP

Dear Sirs,

As a lifelong inhabitant of the Cooley Peninsula I am both shocked and appalled by the proposed changes to planning policies under the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 ("the Draft Plan"). I vehemently oppose this plan and my reasoning for doing so is mostly encapsulated in the following six points.

1. Due democratic process has not adequately taken place. Given the current Covid-19 pandemic the people of county Louth have not been afforded the opportunity to meet and discuss the impacts of the Draft Plan as they usually would. Nor has the proposals under the Draft Plan been highlighted as they usually would. This undoubtedly means that large swathes of people, to whom the Draft Plan will have large repercussions on, may not even be aware of its existence. Such a failing is reprehensible, particularly given the proposed controversial one-off rural housing provisions.

The need for proper and detailed consultation on the drastic changes proposed by the Draft Plan is vital, and to deny the Cooley Peninsula's inhabitants of the same is unacceptable in the extreme.

2. The proposed "Rural Zone One" under the Draft Plan is discriminatory in nature. To only grant planning permission to those who fall within two incredibly narrow categories discriminates against those whose family are not wealthy or do not engage in full time agriculture, i.e. a large number of people who have grown up and spent much of their young lives on the peninsula.

At least six generations of my family have lived on the Cooley Peninsula, none of which owned close to three hectares of land, and all of whom were tradesmen, and not engaged in agricultural business of any kind. Under the Draft Plan you are ruling that I, and people like me, will no longer be permitted to build a house in the area they and their family have deep roots in. We have just as much of a right to seek planning permission on the land of our forefathers as do the people who meet the narrow categories under the Draft Plan. To exclude is unjustly discriminatory and goes against the spirit of Bunreacht na hEireann which per Art 40.1 holds that all Irish citizens are equal.

3. Further the "Rural Zone One" disproportionately affects those of a certain class, namely those referred to above who do not engage in full time agriculture or whose family do not own three hectares of land. If the Draft Plan proceeds in its current form this class of people will be effectively erased from the area, for no justifiable or reasonable reason.

4. Following on from my third point, the whole county is currently in an extremely precarious position regarding housing. The current housing crisis has been called "the biggest social and economic issue in the country" by the Irish Times (<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/ireland-s-housing-crisis-in-five-revealing-graphs-1.4150332>), with the rise in rent price versus that of people's wages severely out of sync.

The Draft Plan would exclude the vast majority of the peninsula as an area in which people can build, thereby pushing people who would otherwise live there to the nearby town of Dundalk. This

in turn would adversely impact on the house prices in this area, which are already incredibly high, and unattainable for many.

As the Council charged with the Louth county, you owe a duty of care to your inhabitants to provide them with conditions in which they can obtain adequate and affordable housing. Prohibiting the Cooley peninsula as an area in which they may seek planning permission goes against this duty.

5. To assign the large majority of the Cooley peninsula to "Rural Zone One" would undoubtedly put the economy of the area in a precarious position. The area has only recently recovered from the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak of the early 2000's, and is still categorised as a DEIS area by the Department of Education. Classifying the quantity of the peninsula as "Rural Zone One" as outlined in the Draft Plan would leave the area vulnerable to mass ruin should another outbreak of disease as devastating as Foot and Mouth ever happen again.

6. Finally, the population diversity of the peninsula would be put at risk under the Draft Plan. To implement such harsh planning policies would likely discourage people from outside the area to move there. This would be in tandem with closing the area off to large swaths of people and families that have lived in the area their entire lives who do not meet the extreme categories already discussed. The result would be only a small number of families living in the area, harmfully affect the population diversity, and exponentially increasing the risk of nepotism seeping into the control/ ownership of land and, consequentially, the granting of planning permission.

The emotional attachment to the place one grows up in is unlike no other. If you are to proceed with such a harsh and unreasonable restriction on planning in the Cooley Peninsula you will serve an undeservedly devastating blow to the young people of the area, and their relatives. People who have worked hard to see the peninsula grow and prosper, particularly on the back of the economic devastation caused by the Foot and Mouth disease, and the looming threat of Brexit.

To this end I urge you to reconsider the Draft Plan as it relates to the Cooley Peninsula.

Sincerely,

Ruth O Hanlon