

## **Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027**

yvonne [ ]

**Sent:** 23 December 2020 11:04

**To:** LouthCDP

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Date: 23 December 2020

### SUBMISSION – DRAFT LOUTH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make the following submission in relation to the County Development Plan 2020-2026.

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

There is a need for the local authority to make better and realistic accommodations for 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 a hugely negative impact of rural communities like the electoral area of Creggan Upper/Sheelagh.

Creggan Upper is currently sustained and enriched by the local community that live in the rural area. Any change that would occur would only seek to diminish and damage the existing services and indeed the numerous community and voluntary groups.

It is my contention that this area it is facing a serious crisis in the next decade and this will be exacerbated if the draft CDP becomes a reality later this year. The proposal to strictly restrict development in rural areas of the county and to those involved in farming or rural enterprise will devastate our community.

We are an ageing population; The percentage of the population that is 65 years or older is growing. Our health services are under increasing strain trying to meet rising demand and still maintain standards. It is falling to family members and, particularly women to care for their aging population. If family members are unable to live close, their parents will end up going to homes putting more strain on the health services.

The rural community as a whole is older than its urban equivalent. This is a particularly acute issue for farming where the average age of a farmer is 59 years old. National policy needs to help address the needs of this older population group to find alternative accommodation in the

medium term. When a farmer retires the land is often sold without the farmhouse, as the farmer has nowhere else to go, which creates a problem for the next farmer needing to live on site.

The total population of Creggan Upper in the 2016 census was 856. It was 787 in 2011. This slow rate of growth over the decade is destined to become a trickle or disappear altogether in the next 5 years because of the age profile in the area and the lack of zoned land which has any rural chance of being built on during the lifetime of the next CDP.

In 2018 it was reported that there were only 26 pupils that attended Scoil Bhríde, Sealach. The restrictions on rural one-off houses in the draft CDP will mean few, if any new homes will be built in the area and these numbers will decline even further. This failing population will undoubtedly result in loss and downgrading of existing amenities. Our shop, pub, church, school and all other local services and amenities will be at severe risk.

There is little or no prospect of any infill development in the area in the foreseeable future, certainly not enough to meet the demand currently exists and that will exist moving into the future.

The overall plan also spells out clearly how the council intends to restrict housing development in rural areas by approving permissions for once off rural housing to very specific categories of people engaged in agriculture and rural enterprises and who have ties to that local area. The strict implementation of this policy will severely affect local and rural communities including Sheelagh.

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 actively engaged in farming.

There are other categories of people from a local area that should be facilitated with housing in their community such as

- People who are originally from the local area but have left the area previously for employment or other reasons and would like to return
- People who are originally from the local area but are not involved in farming or a rural enterprise
- People who are intrinsically involved in the community
- People who are involved in the community and/or sporting organisation in the area
- People from the area who cannot afford to purchase houses in urban areas

If Louth County Council want to restrict housing in this way they need to facilitate the provision of alternative housing opportunities in local areas like Sheelagh separately.

I would respectfully ask you do not 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,

Yvonne Hamill