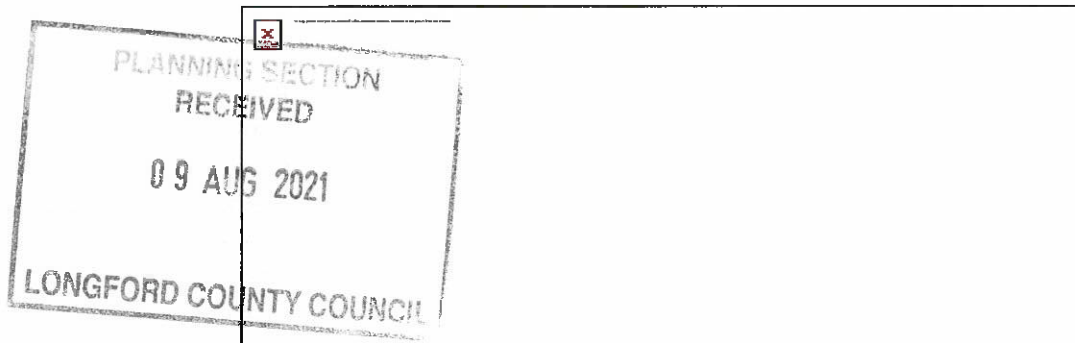


Sub 16

Anne Glancy

From: Creative Ardagh <~~creative.ardagh@gmail.com~~>
Sent: Sunday 8 August 2021 17:58
To: cdp
Subject: EXTERNAL - Objection to Submission DCDP-40 of Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027

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Dear Sir/Madam,

As a concerned local business, we are writing to object to the Chief Executive's recommendation to re-zone the lands of Ardagh Demesne, Ardagh House, and the two gate lodges and to object to the initial submission on behalf of Ardagh Demesne Limited in its entirety.

Submission DCDP-40 asks the three dwellings of Ardagh Demesne, Ardagh House and two gate lodges be re-zoned from "Tourism" to "Residential", and the lands of Ardagh Demesne be re-zoned from "Tourism" to "Agriculture".

The Chief Executive in the 'Report on Submissions Received on the Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027' recommends to:

"Remove the "Tourism Use" zoned lands in Ardagh and de-zone the identified lands to Agricultural use to reflect the existing use of the lands.

To zone Ardagh House and the two gate houses as existing residential use.

To zone lands to the south of the Ardagh House as recreation/amenity in order to protect the view of the House from the centre of the village."

Creative Ardagh have been working to bring visitors to Ardagh since 2011 and we have had approximately 5000 people a year through our doors pre covid. Many of the visitors have lamented the fact that the walk up the avenue is no longer available to them and that they cannot view the stables and courtyard of the big house, including direct descendants of the Fetherston family who were in contact with the current owner themselves. All of our visitors have enjoyed walking in the Neighbourhood Park and it has been an integral part of our educational tours. In fact in November 2017 we had a Transition Year class on tour from Mullingar CBS when they were roared at and sworn at by a man cutting the trees down. We were unaware that this was going to happen and only knew because of the noise of the cutting and the fright this particular man gave us and the students. When we questioned him he said he

was there on the behest of the owner of Ardagh Demesne and that he was told to cut the forest down. We told him to stop and then informed the relevant authorities and the community and the cutting was stopped. We felt after that incident that due to the, perhaps unintentional, perceived malice we were faced with on that day that we should redirect our whole programme to use the forest as little as possible and it completely impacted on our business. Our summer camps revolved around the forest, long before people were talking of forest schools and we had a fairy trail in the forest long before the fairy door company and other fairy trails were established in the country, our plans to have another outdoor play similar to the successful A Midsummer's Night Dream was shelved. In fact a lot of our plans were shelved due to the hostility and uncertainty.

The Neighbourhood Park is a treasure, it is a native deciduous forest which is rare in itself, it was planted by the Tree Council of Ireland and Dr. Christy Boylan of the Tree Council has visited to check how it is on occasion. Some of the school children of the time were involved in the planting and they were heartbroken as adults now to find their trees were some of the ones cut down. The park has been used by the community for thirty years or so and continues to be used.

We are passionate about Ardagh and the history of Ardagh and we cannot understand how despite 10 years of bringing visitors we keep getting overlooked and now it seems there is a push to take Ardagh off the tourism map altogether with this submission and recommendation. Ardagh Heritage Centre was one of the first in the country for a reason, because it is special, Ardagh is special and that includes the Big House and land and the Neighbourhood Park. With the development of Knights and Conquests and the Maria Edgeworths' Centre, Ardagh is the obvious next stop on the way then to Corlea Trackway and the village is already there and the heritage centre is already there. Indeed this was the whole purpose of the Midir and Etain Trail and the reason for the Brí Leith Walk which is being used so much during this pandemic. Why would anyone think it is a good idea to rezone from tourism to agriculture and residential?

There does not seem to be any real reason to rezone as the land is already being used for agriculture daily, the two gatehouses are lived in, and the big house was lived in all during the time the Sisters of Mercy were in it. Rezoning only means the potential for tourism and recreational development is now gone. This is not a time to increase the amount of agricultural land, the owner should be encouraged to rewild instead and use the tourism potential there. Longford could be showing the country how to save the planet instead of constantly destroying its heritage.

This submission to rezone and the recommendation by the County Manager need to be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Gerety Smyth and Annette Corkery