

Sub 62

Deirdre Skelly

From: SJ <~~sj@longfordcouncil.ie~~>
Sent: Tuesday 10 August 2021 14:42
To: cdp
Subject: EXTERNAL - Objection to Submission DCDP-40 of Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027
Attachments: Objection to Submission DCDP-40 of Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.docx

PLANNING SECTION
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Dear Sir / Madame,

As a concerned member of Ardagh Community I object to, and reject, the Chief Executive's recommendation to re-zone the lands of Ardagh Demesne, Ardagh House, and the two gate lodges and also object to the initial submission on behalf of Ardagh Demesne Limited.

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."

Objection attached for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah-Jane Carr



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10 August 2021

Administrative Officer
Review of the County Development Plan
Forward Planning Department
Aras An Chontae
Great Water Street
Longford

By email: cdp@longfordcoco.ie

Re: **Objection to submission DCDP-40 of Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027**

Dear Sir/Madame,

The National Planning Framework (NPF), 2018, and the National Development Plan, 2018 – 2027, form Project Ireland, 2040. Project Ireland 2040 sets out the government's national planning and infrastructure vision for the next 20 years.

This Framework sets out 10 National Strategic Outcomes as follows:

- Compact Growth
- Enhanced Regional Accessibility 1 National Development Plan, 2018 - 2027
- Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
- Sustainable Mobility
- A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
- High-Quality International Connectivity
- **Enhanced Amenity and Heritage**
- **Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society**
- Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources
- Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

I am concerned that the plans to rezone lands at Ardagh House and Demesne are not fulfilling with points 7 & 8.

Enhanced Amenity and Heritage

The history of Ardagh village begins with Ardagh Mountain. Ardagh Mountain was an important part of pre-Christian Ireland, and it is no coincidence that St. Patrick decided to found a monastery at an already established place of worship. The village developed around the monastery, and grew from there. Ardagh remained the centre of the Diocese until the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, and beyond, at least as a spiritual if not physical ecclesiastical centre. Brí Léith Ardagh Mountain, which stands 650 ft high, was known as Brí Léith, and was an important part of pre-Christian Ireland, believed to be the home of Midir, a pre-Christian deity. Much folklore is associated with Brí Léith, and mentioned in the Book of Tara. Bilberries are mentioned in the Book of Rights: the High King was entitled to have bilberries from Brí Léith as part of his harvest meal. Bilberry Sunday, until fairly recently, was a day when local children went up Ardagh Mountain to gather Bilberries.

St. Patrick and St. Mel. It is no surprise that Ardagh changed from being a centre of pre-Christian worship to such an important site of Christian settlement. St. Patrick is thought to have arrived in Ardagh sometime during 434 or 435, and it is understood that the most probable date for the founding of the see at Ardagh is 435 (McNamee, History of Diocese of Ardagh, p. 27) Unfortunately, like the pre-Christian era, there is little or no contemporary documentary evidence relating to St. Patrick or St. Mel, with the first mention of St. Mel appearing in Tirechán's Latin account of St. Patrick's mission, dating from 700AD. St. Mel was consecrated a Bishop by St. Patrick and made head of the Diocese of Ardagh. St. Brigid was another of St. Patrick's followers to visit Ardagh. It is thought that Brigid was, according to legend, professed as the first nun in Ireland by St. Mel in Ardagh, and some even claim she was made a bishop. Along with St. Mel, St. Brigid is patron of the Diocese, hence the reason why she is patron of the nineteenth century Catholic Church in the village.

For some time throughout the medieval period, Ardagh suffered great turmoil. In 1167, the whole of Ardagh, encompassing the church and the houses, was razed to the ground. Again, in 1230, Ardagh was the scene of a contest for the bishopric, and as a result opposing factions caused the destruction of the Episcopal house and cathedral tower. In 1496, William O'Ferrall, who had been bishop since 1479, attempted to take over as chieftain of Annaly (Longford) from the other branch of the O'Ferrall family, which resulted in a severe attack on Ardagh, leaving little of the cathedral intact. The roof, Sacristy, campanile and bell were all destroyed, leaving only a single altar. The church, which is still in ruins today, never recovered from this attack. This had an adverse effect on village itself. Writing in 1682, Nicholas Dowdall Esq. described Ardagh as "a place quite ruined, there being only a few thatched houses, there is the ruins of the Cathedral but clearly demolished." The village did not recover from these earlier religious feuds until the Fetherston family arrived in the early 1700s.

The Fetherston Family Estate The first recorded Fetherstons in the Midlands area arrived from Northumberland in the late seventeenth century, although they did not settle in Ardagh until the early eighteenth century. The first Fetherston recorded in Ardagh was Thomas Fetherston, who bought the house and 235 acres of land around 1703 and died 1749. The family was given the rank of Baronet in 1780 although there is no exact date, it is thought that Ardagh House was built before 1745, the year that the writer Oliver Goldsmith is said to have visited the house.

Local legend, Oliver Goldsmith is thought to have arrived in the village and asked locals for an inn, who, in jest, pointed him towards Ardagh House. The Squire Fetherston, instead of being affronted, played along, agreeing to accommodate him, the squire's daughter pretending to be a servant. Goldsmith only

discovered the truth when asked for the bill at breakfast. It is believed that this story inspired Goldsmith's most famous play, "She Stoops to Conquer." The most significant mark left by the Fetherston family was the substantial social improvement carried out in the village in the 1860s, and which is still visible today. The village was designed and built by an architect friend of Sir George Fetherston's nephew Sir Thomas, J. Rawson Carroll, as a memorial to his uncle, although it was Sir George who initially considered it. It is thought that the design was based on lady Fetherston's idea of a Swiss village, which she had seen whilst on holiday. The clock tower, village green and the arts-and-crafts-style houses were all designed with the view from the house in mind.

By 1891 Sir George Fetherston who, by this stage was the fifth baronet, was a member of the Anglican clergy and an absentee landlord living in Wales, with his sisters Adeline and Caroline living in Ardagh House.

Ardagh post 1922. Ardagh House was taken over by the Sisters of Mercy of Longford in 1927, and the house became a technical school for girls. Ardagh village, since Ireland gained its independence, has followed the pattern of most traditional Irish villages. Population decline as a result of migration has been a common problem, although, like many Irish villages, the last decade has seen a substantial increase in Irish people returning to their home counties, whether from the cities and towns or from further afield. This presents a turnaround in the fortunes and the character of such a village: while once the area was relatively poor and, for the greater part, consisting of an elderly community, today Ardagh has many more families living there, thus redressing the age balance and injecting new life into the area. The ecclesiastical importance of Ardagh lives on in its ruined churches, which bear testimony to the turbulent history of the parish, as well as in the names of many of the townlands in the parish. Cross and Bohernacross are named after the termon crosses which marked the boundaries of the church lands, while others, such as Meeltanagh and Ardnyskine are named after events concerning St. Patrick's time in the area, and Glenanaspic, Aughanaspic and Ardbohill indicate the site of bishops' residences. The legacy of the Fetherston family lives on in the carefully designed Ardagh House and village.

Longford County Council together with the current owner of Ardagh House & Demesne must address the impacts of the proposed plans from Architectural and Archaeological Heritage perspectives. The Planning and Development Act, 2000 requires that every development plan include a record for the purpose of protecting structures or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. In addition to this the owners of such protected buildings are responsible for the maintenance to ensure the building does not become derelict. From my own observations this is not being complied with.

Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

Climate change is a material consideration in relation to the agricultural use of this land. There are four key areas that must be considered by our Local Authority to address Ireland's climate law which commits Ireland to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

1. **Climate Change** - Impact of Livestock on Climate Change

The most important greenhouse gases from animal agriculture are methane and nitrous oxide. Methane, mainly produced by enteric fermentation and manure storage, is a gas which has an effect on global warming 28 times higher than carbon dioxide.

2. **Biodiversity** - We rely on the health of ecosystems for our general well-being, they provide our food, our water, even our air. The substantial greenhouse gas emissions are intensifying climate change and making certain habitats increasingly hostile to live in. Large scale farming endangers the natural world. By taking action against traditional farming, we are also helping to preserve valuable ecosystems and the animals and plants that inhabit them. Rewilding should be incorporated into the development of Ardagh House & Demesne. Dunsany Castle which is of similar size begun this six years ago.
3. **Pollution** - Farm animals produce large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus rich waste on a daily basis. Nitrogen and phosphorus can create significant problems. For example, they can leak into water courses. This can kill plants and animals. Some of the nitrogen will also become gaseous, turning into ammonia, which can acidify waters and deplete the ozone layer. We can be directly affected too, as the quality of water supplies can be threatened.
4. **Resource Waste** - Farming uses a huge amount of resources, such as water, grain and oil, but providing relatively little energy in return. On average, it takes 6kgs of plant protein to produce 1kg of animal protein.

There are several Climate crisis campaigners that have been voicing their concerns on a global platform for years. Longford County Council and representatives cannot ignore the actions that are being taken worldwide. Ardagh is an exceptional heritage village steeped in history in County Longford. The development of Ardagh House & Demesne should be approached with the reverence and respect it deserves. An organic farm or nature reserve would create sustainability and have a very positive impact on Ardagh Village. Change begins at grass roots levels, we are all responsible to work towards becoming a carbon neutral Country by 2050 for our future generations.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah-Jane Carr

