

Submission no. 116.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday 16 November 2020 13:02
To: forwardplan
Subject: Development Plan Review



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in reference to the Development Plan Review currently under consideration and in reference to the Issues Paper that has been circulated. I offer the following observations as my submission toward the review and planning process.

I have 3 main concerns based on my own community and several general observations in relation to the Issues Paper.

First: Please consider seriously the quality of life impacts on permanent residents when considering planning for large tourism developments. Communities can be wrecked by well-intentioned developments that make life unliveable in the vicinity. While tourists can choose where to go, residents have put down roots in their community and live there everyday, not just for a weekend. Excessive nighttime noise, large streetlamp lighting, large groups of inebriated visitors, littering, etc.--all of these can destroy the peaceful lives of neighbours. Large tourism developments should be carefully sited away from permanent residents and town/village centres.

Second: Please consider strengthening of essential services and infrastructure and road calming in rural communities near to large tourist sites. Rural communities often bear the impacts of excessive traffic and large vehicles travelling to and from tourist attractions. The impacts on infrastructure, such as deteriorating roads must be considered, as well as threats to public safety caused by speeding traffic and large vehicles. Footpaths should be provided to ensure pedestrian safety, bike lanes should be considered where possible.

Third: Please support and protect the Character of small communities by allowing appropriate growth and challenging development out of proportion to the location.

Some general observations on the Issues Paper:

1. Living sustainably without compromising future generations

'Wild Atlantic Way': One of Ireland's greatest assets in 2020 is the relative lack of development in the rural centres and countryside. This quiet landscape has an enormous appeal—and consequently an economic value—for visitors and residents. Planning departments throughout the country and especially in Co Clare have an enormous challenge to protect this ephemeral asset while ensuring access to homes, economic development and the installation of necessary infrastructure. Every little bit of the wild landscape that is destroyed is a loss for the present and the future. The threats to the pastoral beauty that we market to tourists and value so much ourselves are quantifiable and preventable:

Light Pollution—restrict use of outdoor lights at night

Noise Pollution—restrict noise pollution above dB limits, protect 'Quiet Spaces'

Air and Water Pollution—Eliminate the dumping of raw sewage now, address pollution of watercourses.

Visual Clutter—Control signage and inappropriate development

Loss of trees, wild hedging and greenspace—plant native trees where possible, protect and restore hedging, green corridors and greenspaces in towns/villages.

Loss of wildlife—protect wildlife habitats at every opportunity

Vehicular traffic—create vehicle-free zones, pedestrian and cycle corridors, create and protect cycle lanes. Widen footpaths.

2. Promoting town and village centre vibrancy and vitality with multi-functional uses including entertaining, living, gathering, shopping.

The importance of village centre vitality to the permanent residents cannot be overstated, and should not be sacrificed for services entirely for tourists. Planning decisions must protect rural centres for the residents.

In the village of Liscannor, you can see what damage has been done by unthinking development to the village centre. It is clear where planning has favoured economic development over the character of the village and quality of life for permanent residents. In one village centre location, what could have been a hub of activity for residents has become moribund; the location—which previously hosted a small supermarket, a local gallery and café and a restaurant—now hosts a holiday rental, a tourist-oriented shop and an office building. In another location right in the centre, an enormous carpark built for tourists to the Cliffs sits locked and unused, even as carparking is needed in the village.

3. Living in the Future and how it will be different

A. Decentralization of Population

We have seen in 2020 how quickly urban centres become undesirable places to live, and how many people would choose rural living if their work would allow. Should this become possible for large numbers of the population, it will be a challenge for planning, as housing and infrastructure in many rural Co Clare locations is inadequate for current population. Permanent housing in and near rural centres should be preferred over development purely for tourism. It is also worth mentioning that, while tourism is one important economic driver, permanent residents contribute much more to the local economy. The quality of life of residents should be protected over the convenience of visitors.

B. Live/Work infrastructure

Internet infrastructure in rural locations is improving, and should continue to do so—for many rural businesses and employees it is the way to work. Employees who work from home and businesses who sell online rely increasingly on the rural community as their business hub. The rural post office, internet hubs, and local businesses replace city centre businesses as service providers. Making rural centres more vital, and supporting services to these communities is essential.

C. Outdoor Living

Covid19 has made it clear how important fresh air is to health. Considering the introduction of outdoor seating in pubs and restaurants as a normal part of the development is going to continue to be important in the future as it is in 2020. Wider footpaths are important, as are outdoor gathering areas and seating in town/village centres.

D. Walking/Cycling

Footpaths should be planned as part of any new road developments, to encourage pedestrians. Cycle paths and off-road cycle routes should also be part of road/highway planning. If the infrastructure leads, the people will follow.

Thank you for your kind attention,

Sara Foust



