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What area does your submission relate to?

Housing Strategy

Your comments**File Upload**

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Wicklow County Council
Planning Department,
County Council Buildings,
Wicklow Town.
Co. Wicklow.

RE: WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Main Scope: Rural Planning Strategy

Below are several points which I would like addressed in the new County Development Plan.

1 Rural Clusters, Small Villages & Rural Area's

It is my opinion that more areas need to be selected as both Level 8 (Small Villages) and 9 (Rural Clusters) in this County Development Plan. In making more areas available for rural development it would encourage rural development to be carried out in key designated areas which will lead to enhanced protection of the rural landscape in addition to making the planning process easier.

I think it is key in the rural strategy to try designate areas for development in locations which will help control the need for as abundant spartic one off dwellings. It should be noted however; that I do not believe that all one-off dwellings should be stopped in the open countryside and only allowed in designated areas. I simply believe that if more areas were available, we would better see who qualifies under HD23 building in rural clusters.

2 Rural Cluster Design

Under the current County Development plan 2016-2022 Appendix 2 - Single Rural House Design Guidelines were issued, I feel that the following point could be dealt with in this section for reference for Agents, Clients and planner's so there are less grey areas. It is my option that rural cluster design beside existing dwelling's should be encouraged instead of being discouraged which it seems to be under both current policy and decisions. My idea of rural cluster would be where possible to try using new or existing lanes for rural development so that through good planning and design; pockets of dwellings on family land will create small hamlet type developments and discourage, to a point, the conventional building on the roadside boundary which I think more quickly erodes the natural beauty in the area which we are all trying to protect.

At present this development idea is being called "haphazard backland suburban estate type development" which is not correct, the idea would be for people in the area who qualify for a rural house building as a cluster thus reducing the impact on the open countryside.

Under the current County Development plan 2016-2022 Appendix 2 - Single Rural House Design Guidelines was issued, I think this point could be dealt with in this section

for reference for Agents, Clients and planner's so there are less grey areas.

3 Backland Development

At present many people who qualify under HD 23 for building a dwelling in the open countryside have parents whom have large plots with their dwelling. Currently building a second dwelling behind the existing dwelling (Backland Development) is discouraged. I think this is wrong and a chance to create rural clusters is being missed. Yes some design standards must be met; but by using the existing available lands to the rear of current dwellings less people will have to apply for permission for rural dwelling on a roadside site's thus reducing the effect on the natural landscape of the area. Through effective dwelling and landscape design these "backland dwellings" will have no impact on the existing dwelling or the area.

Under the current County Development plan 2016-2022 Appendix 2 - Single Rural House Design Guidelines were issued, I think the above points could be dealt with better in this section with the addition of details to be used for reference for Agents, Clients and planners. Backland development was addressed in this but I would be against the notion that backland development is bad for rural development and planning and this issue should be revised.

4 Object TR27 - Which seeks to restrict new access onto regional roads.

Whilst I agree with the above objective in principle that creating new entrances on certain Regional roads is a traffic hazard; I disagree with the fact that every regional road in Wicklow is given the same weighting in this regard. I think there should be a clause in the aforementioned objective that if it is proven through traffic survey and verified by a suitably qualified engineer that the proposed new entrance (including new entrances for domestic dwellings) is safe due to low speed at certain points, low volumes of traffic etc, it should be allowed.

5 HD23 - Housing in the Open Countryside

HD 23 under Wicklow County Development plan 2016-2022 sets out the 16 circumstances where a development/person is considered for a single dwelling in the open countryside. Namely: -

1. A permanent native resident seeking to build a house for his / her own family and not as speculation. A permanent native resident shall be a person who has resided in a rural area in County Wicklow for at least 10 years in total (including permanent native residents of levels 8 and 9), or resided in the rural area for at least 10 years in total prior to the application for planning permission.

Is 10 years still relevant to the planning section? I believe 10 years is a good span to prove a person is a permanent native resident but in some cases people who are proving over 10 years are not deemed to qualify to build in a level 10 area. There cannot be any grey areas with this as it is very clear in the way it is stated. I think this needs to be discussed as this is one of the main policy's in rural planning and if it's not being accepted in all cases of compliance then something must be done.

2. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area in which the proposal relates and not as speculation.

Majority of applicants qualify under this or number 3 and I think it works quite well.

3. A son or daughter, or niece/nephew considered to merit the same position as a

son/daughter within the law (i.e. when the uncle/aunt has no children of his/her own), of a permanent native resident of a rural area, whose place of employment is outside of the immediate environs of the local rural area to which the application relates and who can demonstrate a definable social or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates and not as speculation.

Majority of applicants qualify under this or number 2 and I think it works quite well.

4. Replacing a farm dwelling for the needs of a farming family, not as speculation. If suitable the old dwelling may be let for short term tourist letting and this shall be tied to the existing owner of the new farm dwelling where it is considered appropriate and subject to the proper planning and development of the area.

I believe more weight needs to be given to people who are trying to renovate or replace existing farm buildings as their own dwelling if they can prove they are tied heavily to agriculture. I also think people who qualify for a rural dwelling in an area where their parents may have a farm but, have purchased a farm in a separate location in rural Wicklow with a view to setting up their own farm occupation; should be given priority to build on the new farm instead of trying to coerce them back to their parents' farm. I would also like to see if it is possible (it may not be possible, but it is at least worthy of discussion, so we have a clearer picture) figures on income or land size being required to be classed under this section.

5. A person whose principal occupation is in agriculture and can demonstrate that the nature of the agricultural employment is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation.

I would like to see whether it is possible (it may not be possible, but it should at least be discussed) figures on income or land size being required to be classed under this section.

6. An immediate family member (i.e. son or daughter) of a person described in 5, who is occupied in agriculture and can demonstrate that the nature of the agricultural employment is sufficient to support full time or significant part time occupation.

I would like to see whether it is possible (it may not be possible, but it should at least be discussed) figures on income or land size being required to be classed under this section.

7. A person whose principal occupation is in a rural resource-based activity (i.e. agriculture, forestry, mariculture, agri-tourism etc.) can demonstrate a need to live in a rural area in order to carry out their occupation. The Planning Authority will strictly require any applicant to show that there is a particular aspect or characteristic of their employment that requires them to live in that rural area, as opposed to a local settlement.

I would also like to see if it is possible (it may not be possible, but it is at least worthy of discussion, so we have a clearer picture) figures on income or exact type of jobs being required to be classified under this section.

8. A close relative who has inherited, either as a gift or on death, an agricultural holding or site for his/her own purposes and not for speculation and who can demonstrate a definable social and / or economic need to live in the area to which the proposal relates.

9. The son or daughter of a landowner who has inherited a site for the purpose of building a one off rural house and where the land has been in family ownership as at 11th October 2004 for at least 10 years prior to the application for planning permission and not as speculation.

I think this clause needs to be addressed and possibly merged with another clause, it is very open ended.

10. An emigrant who qualifies a permanent native resident, returning to a rural area in County Wicklow, seeking to build a house for his/her own use not as speculation.

11. Persons whose work is intrinsically linked to the rural area and who can prove a definable social or economic need to live in the rural area

I think this clause needs amending to include more detailed definition and quid lines is needed.

12. A permanent native resident that previously owned a home and is no longer in possession of that home (for example their previous home having been disposed of following legal separation / divorce / repossession, the transfer of a home attached to a farm to a family member or the past sale of a home following emigration) and can demonstrate a social or economic need for a new home in the rural area.

13. Permanent native residents of moderate and small growth towns, seeking to build a house in their native town or village within the 60kph / 40mph speed limit on the non national radial roads, for their own use and not as speculation as of 11th October 2004.

14. A person whose business requires them to reside in the rural area and who can demonstrate the adequacy of the business proposals and the capacity of the business to support them full time.

I would like to see whether it is possible (it may not be possible, but it should at least be discussed) figures on income being required to be classed under this section.

15. Permanent native residents of the rural area who require a new purpose built specially adapted house due to a verified medical condition and who can show that their existing home cannot be adapted to meet their particular needs.

16. Persons who were permanent native residents of a rural area but due to the expansion of an adjacent town / village, the family home place is now located within the development boundary of the town / village.

I personally think there needs to be a definitive cut off point to this clause, I.E the boundary has moved in the past 10 years, but this should be discussed.

Whilst most of the above 16, give good guideline requirements to qualification for a rural dwelling, I believe that some are outdated and need to be removed while others are not applied during planning application as there are far too many grey areas. I think this list needs to be revisited and for each point a more detailed list of criteria needs to be given, as at present the criteria are very much open to interpretation. Under certain points I have put my sentiments in red; these in particular I would like to be revisited however I think this whole section should be looked at, discussed and debated so that clear guidelines could be established. This would make the guidelines easier for Agent's, Clients and planners to follow and adhere to, in difficult cases for planning and remove any scope for individual interpretations.

6 Ribbon Development

Ribbon Development is used in an application for rural planning for refusal reasons but without clear definition in the County Development Plan. The definition for ribbon development for rural planning as set out in the appendix for the national guidelines, sustainable rural housing guidelines for Planning Authorities (April 2005) which indicates that guidelines recommend against creation or exacerbation of ribbon development with it noted that such would be defined by 5 or more houses existing on any one side of a given 250m of road frontage. I propose that the above definition or similar be added to the new County Development Plan to alleviate the problem.

Under the current County Development plan 2016-2022 Appendix 2 - Single Rural House Design Guidelines was issued, I believe the above arguments could be dealt with in this section for reference for Agents, Clients and planners so there is a greater abundance of

detail. Through doing this; it will give clear and precise guidelines in the Rural strategy in Wicklow.

7 Definition by distance from family home to site for rural planning

This is a grey area in rural planning that I would like to see more definite rules in the New county development plan which should benefit Agent's, Clients' and planners alike. I would like to see in the County development either of the following two options put into place;

1. A set distance that can be agreed upon for the distance from a person's family home to a proposed site in Level 10 area. Be it 10km or 5 km that could be discussed. Something similar to the Level 9 a criterion which is very definite "be a resident for at least 10 years duration in County Wicklow of a settlement/area designated as Level 7-10 in the County settle hierarchy that is within 10km of the rural cluster in question prior to making of application/purchase of new house"

Or

2. Rural to rural is acceptable. I.E if you qualify under HD23 in Wicklow in an area you qualify in all of Level 10 areas in Wicklow.

Conclusion:

My submission is in relation to my views for the forward rural planning objective in Wicklow. I think that small changes need to be made to

1. Encourage more growth in Level 8 and 9 settlements by creating more of these clusters in Wicklow
2. Encourage more cluster developments rather than discouraging them by changing our attitude to backland development and rural lane design where we can cluster dwellings together but with good design standards.
3. While I know it is impossible that the County Development Plan would be able to set a detailed and extensive list for rural planning in the entire rural area as each site and area is different; I believe that having more clarity in our rural design and guidelines in key areas is critical. As seen in the points above, most of our current strategy is open to interpretation, which leads to confusion and is not really a united development strategy than more of a haphazard development idea. All the points I have raised should be discussed; but at the end I think to be in the best interest of all parties more detail and set guidelines for all to follow will enhance the rural planning process.

I hope you find this satisfactory and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Signed: _____

Liam Kenna