

[REDACTED]

Sent: 13 January 2020 10:23
To: 'SIMON MURPHY'
Cc: Planning - Plan Review
Subject: RE: COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN - Submission from Simon Murphy

A Chara,

I wish to acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of your submission regarding the County Development Plan review.

Regards

[REDACTED]
Administrative Officer
Planning Control.

From: SIMON MURPHY [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 January 2020 23:19
To: Planning - Plan Review
Subject: COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN - Submission from Simon Murphy

Dear Sirs,

Please find attached my submission as part of the public consultation process in the preparation of the County Development Plan 2022-2027

Please acknowledge safe receipt.

Simon Murphy

SUBMISSION FROM
Simon Murphy SCSi

TO
WICKLOW COUNTY COUCIL
REGARDING
COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2021-2027

Introduction:

Simon Murphy is a practicing Estate Agent, based in West Wicklow since 1986, during which time the unabated demise of the majority of West Wicklow hamlets, villages and towns has materialised – Blessington Town being the exception to the general trend.

Forward

This submission is primarily focused on encouraging a fundamental change in how Wicklow County Council approaches this Development Plan from the approach taken by the Local Authority in the preparation of the current and previous County and Town Development plans.

An review of the effectiveness of previous plans will show that the Development Plans have more served to maintain a status quo for the greater West Wicklow area than assist its development.

A more forensic examination will confirm that the majority of hamlets, villages and towns in West Wicklow have regressed during the duration of the past 3 Development Plans.

To avoid the forthcoming Development Plan being a continuation of this regression, this submission seeks to have management of Wicklow County Council challenge its personnel to be positively pro-active in planning for the future development of each Hamlet, Village and Town in the county.

While regulation provides for a 5-year cycle for a review of the Development plan, the Development plan should provide for a long-term vision of each hamlet, village and Town (at least up to 2040 in line with the Spatial Strategy term) – a timeframe in which identified necessary investment can be achieved and interim decisions can be made against the long-term vision.

It is acknowledged that Wicklow County Council objectives must be aligned to the national and regional strategic policy documents including the 'National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020', the 'Regional Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly) 2019-203, however, the Local Authority does have a high level of discretion in how it plans for the development of the County.

This submission seeks to have this discretion fully utilized in a considered manner, to include proactive engagement with the various Hamlets, Villages and Towns, to establish where each community wishes to be by 2040 and how this and subsequent Development Plans will assist each community in achieving that end.

Climate Change, Flooding & Coastal Zone Management

Are you aware of any areas that are liable to flooding that should be identified in the SFRA?

Baltinglass Town Centre and parts of Parkmore Estate in Baltinglass Town are flood risk areas which has been identified many years ago.

Baltinglass Town Centre and the lands along the River Slaney bank from Eldon Bridge to the north through Parkmore Estate and to Holdenstown Bridge need to be included in the proposed SFRA, to be correctly assessed and to reduce the quantity of lands adjacent to Baltinglass Town Centre which could be excluded from development by the future Baltinglass Town development plan.

How should the Council manage pressure for development in flood risk areas?

Demand for development in flood risk areas should be managed in line with the recommendations of the SFRA complimented with innovating planning.

Development does not necessarily involve permanent structures. Development can include innovative use of flood plains.

The Local Authority should use its planning expertise to actively promote innovative development of flood plains of strategic benefit to communities, which reflects the level of risk balanced with the spinoff benefits to the local community.

Housing

What type of houses are required to meet housing demand?

The housing challenge for Wicklow County Council lies in the extreme differences in what housing is required between various parts of its jurisdiction.

Broad brush policy in previous Development Plans has largely served to restrict the necessary growth of certain Towns, Villages and Hamlets resulting in a serious deterioration in basic services currently available in various Towns, Villages and Hamlets, compared to 2010.

Affordability question is more appropriate than house types. Current policy, where contributions to Wicklow County Council in a non-rural development to the north of the County are the same as development contributions to the west or south of the County, is an obstacle to new housing in west and south County Wicklow. A commitment to review the fixed structure set out in the Development Contribution Scheme of 2015 should be included as a policy in the Development Plan.

While higher density use of serviced lands should be adopted, appropriate unit types should be consistent with the characteristics of each community.

Are there certain groups in society that find it difficult to access housing?

Currently the absence of any significant new housing developments, other than social housing schemes (private and public), in mid and south Wicklow, is making it increasingly difficult for people with a budget of €200,000 region who wish to stay in their own locality. The Development Plan must have a policy which assists the delivery of new housing in established Town, Village and Hamlets all around the county.

Is there a need for a special type of housing in your area e.g. the elderly, people with a disability?

More appropriately dealt within each Town and Village plan.

Where and how should social housing be provided?

Social housing should be an integral part of an overall housing policy. Consequently, social housing should be provided in every community where basic services exist and where private housing is also planned for.

Providing Social Housing in locations where private housing is disallowed should be discouraged. Encouraging private housing in conjunction with social housing should be the objective of the Development Plan

How can increased densities be achieved in Wicklow's towns and villages?

Provision of water and waste water services is essential to facilitating any increased development.

A mechanism of preventing "passing the book" to Irish Water, as an obstacle to development in Towns, Villages and Hamlets around Co. Wicklow must be identified within the Development Plan.

Reviewing Development Contributions scheme to reflect varying values throughout the county – Development Contributions could amount to 0.05% of value in some parts and represent 0.02% or less in other parts.

Innovative think towards incentivising the establishing of services in areas throughout the county of Wicklow to support existing and allow future housing in all communities must be identified within the Development Plan.

Economic Development & Employment

What are your views on economic development in County Wicklow? What competitive advantages need to be protected and / or enhanced to sustain and grow economic development?

Perseverance with the outdated objective that every community be capable of providing adequate local employment should be reviewed in detail.

The zoning of large quantities of land for “employment” in areas where evidence shows that no significant increase in employment will occur.

Box ticking to have unrealistic targets for traditional employment included in the Development Plan should be firmly resisted – should such need arise such unexpected development can be readily dealt at review stage or via a material change if an exceptional opportunity arose. For example, allocating hectares of lands for industrial development on Towns and Villages of West Wicklow can only be seen as a failure of the process to face up to the commercial reality of where future large employment will be based. In addition, assuming that the Towns and Villages of West Wicklow are going to attract significant Employers excuses the Development Plan from identifying how the communities of West Wicklow can grow economic development.

What measures can be put in place to ensure Wicklow is viewed as a more attractive employment base?

1. Recognition by the Local Authority that if Employers cannot have ready access to an acceptable level of public transport and ease of access to the National Primary routes, it is certain that Employers will not elect to locate in much of County Wicklow.
2. Recognition that the Local Authority is allowing County Wicklow become a microcosm of the East / West divide happening at national level, a decision to reverse this imbalance and provisions in the Development Plan.
3. A move by the Local Authority to recognising that the Wicklow Mountains are a unmovable obstacle to Wicklow developing as if the Wicklow Mountains were not there. The economic development of West Wicklow will be influenced to a significant extent by what happens in Co. Kildare and Co. Carlow. The Towns and Villages of West Wicklow are obvious residential hubs to serve Naas, Newbridge, Kilcullen, Carlow.

4. A move from the view that the vast % of County Wicklow is an attractive location for significant Employers. To secure economic development throughout County Wicklow the Development Plan must provide for measurable objectives and targets for all arms of the Local Authority relating to enterprise, to include tourism related bodies.
5. Immediate, proactive approach to the upgrading of:
 - a. the R747 from Baltinglass to the R448.
 - b. the county road from Dunlavin to the R448.
 - c. The R410 from Blessington to Naas
 - d. Advance the deferred proposed upgrade to the N81 from Brittas to Hollywood.

How can the Plan promote and facilitate new economic opportunities?

1. Recognise the obstacles.
2. Have provision in place to address those obstacles.
3. Incentivise new enterprise and promote economic opportunities – encourage entrepreneurship.
4. Identify how the Local Authority will lead micro development of economic opportunities throughout the county.

Where should economic development be located?

Economic development should be targeted for every Town and Village throughout the county, but the expectations should be aligned through realistic reasoning as to what is possible.

In the Rathdangan area, a cottage industry may evolve into an employer of a small-medium sized employment numbers, but it is more likely that a number of tourism related outlets serving the tourism potential of the Glen of Imaal, Michael Dwyer history and the Wicklow Way will be where the economic development of Rathdangan may lie.

Are there new ways of working that should be facilitated in the Plan e.g. co-working hubs, working from home, live-work units,

Co-working hubs will help address the Climate Change challenges and may lead to increase population in certain areas where Broadband and community services

are established and deemed to be attractive and accessible locations, but it is unlikely to be a significant contributor to economic development.

Co-working hubs, working from home, live-work units, should be part of the plan for economic development but not identified as the main plank.

How can the County's rural economy be diversified to sustain rural areas?

1. Focused assessment of rural communities as to what is necessary to sustain existing services. The past 3 Development Plans have set out targets for Towns, Villages and Hamlets which were based on ideology but absent of commercial reality. The result is that most communities in West Wicklow have regressed during the lifetime of the past Development Plans.

The Development Plan must include methodology as to how rural communities in West Wicklow must progress to ensure that at least the existing services survive but with a realistic aspiration that local services will improve between now and 2040.

2. Micro entrepreneurship must be encouraged in the agricultural and tourism sectors.

Town and Village Centres & Retail

What measures are required to make our towns and villages more vibrant and attractive as places to live in, work in, shop and visit?

How can the Plan improve retail vibrancy in Wicklow's towns and villages?

What can we do about vacant units in our towns and village centres?

1. Ascetic appearance. The Development Plan must provide targets for communities throughout the County to improve the physical appearance.
2. Significant improvement in the effectiveness of the Joint Policing Committee on developing mechanisms within communities to assist the Gardai in reducing/preventing anti-social behaviour.
3. Focused approach to the commercial realities of operating a business in the more rural communities of the county, and assisting business which requests assistance prior to business closing – concession on Commercial

Rates, etc. A traffic lights system where any business can highlight difficulties.

4. Improved access
5. Improved public transport.

Have previous plans been successful in guiding retail development to the right locations?

An assessment of where retail development has taken place over the past 20 years and is still operating, would be a very helpful exercise to answer this question.

Such factual assessment will readily establish if the retail policy of the previous Development Plans has served the communities of Co. Wicklow well.

Tourism and Recreation

How should tourism be developed throughout County Wicklow without compromising our valuable resources including our scenic landscape and rich heritage?

Developing tourism does not necessarily compromising the valuable tourism resource.

One of the most protected tourist attractions in the world The Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in Peru, is a massive tourist attraction of significant importance, and it is suitably protected via appropriate management to allow it me a major economic benefit for the local economies.

Thousands of Irish people annually are spending significant money to walk Camino de Santiago – a significant volume will have never set foot of the Wicklow Way let alone walk its full length.

Adopting the approach taken in other Counties or utilising the expertise of the OPW should be looked at.

The Development plan must be aggressive in committing the Local Authority to delivering specific tourism related results for each local area. Such targets must not remain unfulfilled and if the Local Authority does not have the expertise or is not disposed to the importance of delivering on such targets, external agencies must be engaged with to assist the Local Authority.

Is there a need for more tourist facilities within the County? If so, what is needed and where should they be located?

Significant growth in tourism facilities in West Wicklow must be included in the Development Plan.

Baltinglass Town is a designated Heritage Town surrounded by the highest density of historical sites of any Town in the country. Baltinglass Abbey is the mother house of Jerpoint Abbey. As you drive from the Capital City along the N81, there is not one mention of Baltinglass Town as a tourism destination.

How can County Wicklow capitalise on the potential associated with Ireland's Ancient East?

Link the West Wicklow area to the tourism traffic travelling the M9.

Are there any outdoor tourism and recreation facilities that the County lacks?

Casual glamping and weekend facilities in or adjacent to Towns.

Cycling routes.

Feeder walks to the Wicklow Way.

Tourism Accommodation.

The Development Plan must provide for the development of tourism related micro facilities can be readily achieved, which are sustainable and which are reflective of the rural and rugged aspect of the Wicklow countryside.

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