

Laura Crawford

From: iaan mcgreeghan [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 February 2025 16:51
To: Planning
Subject: LA01/2023/0583/O - Outline objection to submissions - Planning Meeting dated 26th February 2025

Dear Sir/ Madam,

For information of Rachel McWilliams and /or assigned Planning Officer.
For information of the Planning Committee 26th February 2025.

Ref: LA01/2023/0583/O

We are aware of a meeting set for 26th February 2025 for consideration by the Planning Committee, for decision regarding a referred application by Alderman Mark Fielding Dup.

We have taken stock of the comments submitted by Alderman Mark Fielding, Dup Councillor on Causeway Coast and Glens Council regarding his support to the proposed development by Mr David Stewart, 8 Culmanan Road, Garvagh BT51 5JR at Ballywoodock Road, Castlerock.
(LA01/2023/0583/O refers.)

The key focus of the original planning refusal is, in our understanding, based on maintaining the integrity of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21), ensuring that policies are correctly applied, and demonstrating why the development would be inappropriate in this rural location.

We have listed the arguments provided by Mr Fielding, grammatically unchanged below, and referenced our objections to his submissions.

This is in addition to our original and subsequent notifications of objection as received and recorded by the Planning Office.

Refusal Reason 1 cited by Mr Fielding: "The dwelling proposed infill do not erode the character of the area. As there is it no backdrop land to impact while travelling on the ballywoodock road."

Counter-Commentary:

CTY 1 establishes that new development in the countryside is only acceptable under specific circumstances, such as replacement dwellings, social and economic considerations, or infill development in accordance with CTY 8. The application does not meet any of these exceptions.

The argument that infill does not erode the rural character ignores the fundamental principle of CTY 1, which is to protect the countryside from unnecessary development unless it is essential.

The applicant has not demonstrated that the dwelling is necessary at this location rather than within a designated settlement.

Refusal Reason 2 cited by Mr Fielding: "There is no set criteria of size of the sites in policy, however the site areas vary and are not larger than the dwelling plot 62 ballywoodock on the left. They are larger than the dwelling plot on the right no 68, but not more keeping in size with no 70 ballywoodock."

Counter-Commentary: (Contrary to Policy CTY 8 (Infill Development & Ribbon Development))

The policy states that an infill site must be a "small gap" within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage. The identified gap is approximately 150m, which is capable of accommodating more than two dwellings and therefore exceeds what would be considered a "small gap." It is stated that this indeed may accommodate up to four dwellings. This application is suggestive of an interest in the longer term of pursuit of four such dwellings.

The absence of a set numerical definition of a "small gap" does not mean any size is acceptable. The policy clearly intends to limit infill to gaps that do not allow for more than two dwellings, ensuring that new development does not significantly alter the pattern of development.

While there may be some variation in site sizes along Ballywoodock Road, this does not justify new development that exceeds the scale of an appropriate infill site.

Refusal Reason 3 cited by Mr Fielding: "Planning department said the site frontage to the road were not in keeping with plot frontage widths of the neighbours, however the road hedges would not enable a passerby to evidently see the plot size on the ground. The proposal should be considered on the relations between the dwelling / building on the landscape. The distance from building to building is acceptable and the frontage hedge length has no planning merit to decide the application."

Counter-Commentary: (Contrary to Policy CTY 13 (Integration & Design))

CTY 13 requires new dwellings to integrate satisfactorily into the landscape rather than relying primarily on new landscaping for integration. The lack of long-established natural boundaries makes it difficult for this site to blend into the countryside.

The argument that the road hedges obscure the site boundaries does not address the fundamental issue of landscape integration. Policy CTY 13 requires that the site itself, not just roadside screening, has a natural sense of enclosure.

The proposal relies on new planting for screening, which is specifically discouraged by CTY 13. The surrounding land lacks sufficient established vegetation to ensure natural integration.

Refusal Reason 4 cited by Mr Fielding: "The application is outline and site plan layouts are based on the hence planning house size of 8m gable and 16m frontage. Which is modest and acceptable and in keeping with its neighbours."

Counter-Commentary: (Contrary to Policy CTY 14 (Rural Character & Ribbon Development))

The proposal would contribute to ribbon development, as it extends an existing line of dwellings along the roadside without forming part of a cluster or existing settlement pattern.

The size and scale of the proposed dwelling (8m gable width, 16m frontage) may be considered by some to be modest, but CTY 14 is not solely about the scale of the dwelling—it is about the cumulative impact on rural character. Approving this dwelling would set a precedent for further development, leading to the gradual erosion of the countryside, and remains in conflict with legislated planning policy.

The argument that the site is within an established built-up frontage is incorrect. There is a substantial gap of 150m, which is large enough to disrupt the existing rural character by introducing additional development that visually extends ribboning along the road.

Conclusion:

The original refusal reasons are correctly applied in accordance with SPPS and PPS 21 and in compliance with legislated planning policy in Northern Ireland. The proposed development in summary:


1. Does not meet the exceptions for new development in the countryside under CTY 1.
2. Exceeds the definition of a “small gap” under CTY 8, leading to ribbon development.
3. Fails to integrate satisfactorily into the landscape as required by CTY 13.
4. Would be detrimental to the rural character, contributing to ribbon development as per CTY 14.

For these reasons, the planning refusal should be upheld to prevent inappropriate countryside development that conflicts with established legislated planning policy, and we are content that Mr Fielding, in public office, is not in any way suggesting any breach of such.

Kind regards

William McGreeghan

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