

Sinead McEvoy

From: Marcus Patton <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 19 April 2019 18:03
To: DevelopmentPlan@midulstercouncil.org
Subject: Local Development Plan comment
Attachments: Mid-Ulster HBC Comment Apr2019.pdf

I would be grateful if you could take into consideration the attached comment on the Mid-Ulster District Council Local Development Plan Strategy from the Historic Buildings Council for Northern Ireland.

Best wishes

Marcus Patton

HISTORIC BUILDINGS COUNCIL

An advisory Council to the Department for Communities

Level 6, Causeway Exchange, 1-7 Bedford Street, Town Parks, Belfast, BT2 7EG

Tel: 02890 823250/02890 823249

<mailto:HBC-HMCsecretariat@communities-ni.gov.uk>

www.hbcni.gov.uk

Planning Department
Mid-Ulster District Council

19 April 2019

Dear Sir

Local Development Plan

I would like to provide some comments on your Local Development Plan on behalf of the Historic Buildings Council. I apologise that this is somewhat late since I note your closing time is 4pm today rather than midnight, but hope that you will be able to consider these general points in taking your plan forward.

Firstly, we would suggest that the historic environment should be given more priority because we believe it impacts on nearly every aspect of the Plan. Historic buildings obviously attract tourists, but they also make a place more pleasant for locals to live in, providing continuity, identity and unique opportunities for economic development. They should figure as part of many other policies rather than being restricted to a segregated section that can be overlooked.

When the historic environment is damaged or destroyed it can never be replaced. It is essential therefore that you have policies which provide strong protection for historic buildings and prompt enforcement when developers wilfully destroy it.

Although the historic environment is often understood to mean listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas, we would point out that most towns and villages have a significant number of older buildings which do not fall within those categories but nevertheless contribute to the overall context and pleasant environment in which our statutorily protected structures exist. These buildings provide a "unique selling proposition" for each Council area, and Mid-Ulster needs to protect its unique assets in the way that many other councils already do.

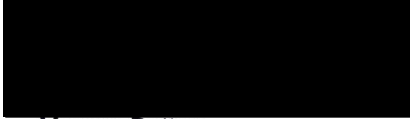
With increasing concern about climate change it is necessary to re-use not just materials but also buildings, and to ensure that buildings are given the chance of long lives rather than being demolished every time a new fashion comes along. Old buildings are usually very flexible and quite capable of hosting new uses. This reduces our reliance on landfill for construction waste and reduces the energy used in making and transporting new building materials, as well as helping to preserve green fields and bio-diversity habitats.

For all these reasons we suggest that the presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings and buildings contributing to the character of conservation areas should be emphasised. Demolition should be a matter of last resort, and not considered without the strongest possible case being put forward for it. Structural instability should be questioned and applicants required to explore how the structure can be made safe rather than accepting an argument that it is unsound. Economic arguments for demolition should also be stringently tested rather than taken at face value.

The basic legislation under which our planning policies work is generally sound, but the operation of it is another matter, with many Councils tempted to approve short term developments rather than looking to the protection of our longer term economic and cultural wealth.

We trust that you will consider these points in taking your Plan forward, and ensure that the built heritage of Mid Ulster is valued and protected as it should be.

Yours faithfully,



Marcus Patton
Chairman