



5 Castle View Terrace,
Castle Street,
Roscommon.

Submission to the Roscommon County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

By Michael Fitzmaurice TD

As a public representative for the Roscommon-Galway constituency, I believe that the next few years could be transformative.

Regarding the Roscommon County Development Plan for 2021 to 2027, I believe it is vital that rural areas are allowed to prosper. If young people from an area, who are going to taking over farms of land or who are going to take care of their parents etc, are looking for planning then they need to be accommodated.

Also, the system around the change of use of buildings in small villages and towns needs to be redesigned to make it less cumbersome. If a person wishes to change an old pub or shop into a residential property, the process needs to extremely stream-lined.

This system also needs to cover if a person wishes to live above a commercial unit, if only the ground floor is needed for the business.

When it comes to the advisory booklet for the design of houses in relation to planning, the regulations seem quite restrictive in Co. Roscommon when compared with other counties. I feel this needs to be re-examined in order to be more open minded.

Moving forward, enough of land needs to be made available in the relevant pressure zones for affordable social housing.

It is also imperative that the completion of unfinished housing estates across the county is a main priority in the coming years. People purchased properties in good faith and are paying mortgages, we cannot leave them high and dry in unfinished estates which will devalue their properties.

While we are talking about the construction of houses, I feel it is important to mention the importance of simplifying the licencing process for quarries. Without those raw materials, people won't be able to build houses.

Masts

When it comes to telecommunication masts, I feel that there is a need to introduce a minimum distance of 200 meters between all new masts and residential properties. This would also apply to the erection of new antennas for additional services not outlined on the original planning application.

Exemptions would only be made when it comes to antennas used to assist the emergency services ie ambulances, fire brigades etc.

As I suggested during Government formation talks earlier this year, I am calling on Roscommon to adopt a 10 to 1 ratio when it comes to planning regulations for wind turbines.

Services

Over the coming years, the roll-out of fibre broadband to rural homes will be significant. Liaising with the various broadband providers, Roscommon County Council need to speed up the process with which road opening licences are obtained for the providers to carry out the necessary work.

Far too often, people on the ground are being denied the right to quality broadband due to delays caused by interactions between broadband providers and local authorities. This needs to be amended.

Businesses, particularly rural pubs and shops, need to be prioritised when it comes to the further roll-out of fibre broadband. It would also encourage entrepreneurship within the county and potential start-up businesses.

On that note, if a person has a viable business idea and needs to erect a shed or premises beside their home, then that should be allowed.

Regarding Roscommon town itself, more efforts need to be made when it comes to developing the IDA center and encouraging potential factories/employers to set up in the county.

In relation to group water schemes, the council needs to be more lenient when it comes to the area of road that has to be reinstated when a trench is dug (ie if a trench only a foot wide is dug, then half the road does not have to be re-tarred and chipped).

Moving forward, I would also encourage the council – as part of the development plan – to be more proactive in working with Irish Water on waste water infrastructure and facilitate as much as possible. The same must be said for liaising with the department on community schemes for villages.

Additional works

Continued emphasis needs to be placed on improving the quality of roads right across the county and carrying out repairs where necessary.

During periods of heavy rainfall, the council must examine where water is lodging on certain roads and put measures in place to rectify this.

We need to also prioritise both planning and supports for people that have valid and viable proposals around promoting the tourism sector, eg hidden heartlands.

When it comes to regeneration supports, particular focus needs to be placed on towns and villages that may be struggling or which have a large number of closed buildings.

Any works or redesigns of town layouts etc must be carried out in consultation with the chamber of commerce, tidy town committee or local community activists – whichever is relevant to a particular case.

Efforts must be made to ensure there is a fair and even distribution of community grants from Government right around the county.

Finally, I believe the council needs to take a proactive approach to tackling flooding issues along with liaising with the OPW. It must be prepared to put funds into works around Lough Funshinagh and be more involved in flooding in the River Shannon.

I look forward to liaising further with the council on the County Development Plan 2021-2027 in the near future.

Michael Fitzmaurice TD

Michael.fitzmaurice@oireachtas.ie

090-6628479