



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

Planning Department
Cloonavin
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DfI Minister Dowds
Private.Office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Date: 01 September 2022

Your Ref:

Our Ref: LDP legislation and
Guidance

Dear Minister Mallon

Subject: Legislative changes required in relation to the LDP process

I write on behalf of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Planning Committee in relation to the above.

At its meeting held on 24 August 2022, the Planning Committee resolved that I should write on their behalf to express their frustration in relation to the Local Development Plan (LDP) process and the impact that this has on their ability to place-shape their Borough for the needs of their constituents.

At the time of transfer of Planning functions to Councils, the Planning function was transferred on the understanding that elected members who have local knowledge of the needs of the area would be able to place-shape the Borough based on its needs. It now transpires, through the prolonged process to reach the stage of agreeing the draft Plan Strategy for publication, that the legislation and guidance is so restricted that local democracy has minimal influence in policy development. Instead, adherence to government legislation, policy and guidance is at the forefront of the process. To make even the minimalist of changes to existing policy requires verifiable evidence that local elected members do not have. We have the knowledge and understanding of what our constituents need, what is working in terms of planning and what is not. This is not set out in any published statistics but based on conversations with our constituents over the many years that we have been involved in local politics.

The current LDP process is in need of urgent reform as outlined by both the PAC Audit and the NIAO Audit into the planning function. We urge you to expedite the establishment of the Independent Commission to review the planning process and to ensure that local elected members are included on the Commission panel. It is important that locally elected members act as a voice for our constituents to ensure that the new system delivers for the needs of the people we are elected to represent; to ensure that we really can deliver local democracy decision-making and place-shaping as was the expectation on the transfer of the planning function in 2015.

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I therefore urge you to expedite the establishment of the Independent Commission with inclusion of locally elected members on the panel to review the planning function to ensure it delivers for the needs of our constituents.

Yours sincerely

Denise Dickson

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Head of Planning

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