

Social  
Democrats

# Holly CAIRNS TD

Representing West Cork



## Holly Cairns TD highlights ‘test case for the role of the planning regulator

Speaking on Wednesday in the Dáil, Cork South West TD, Holly Cairns, raised the issue of a proposed retail outlet centre in east Cork which the Office of the Planning Regulator has made a recommendation against. The ‘Kildare Village’ type centre requires a variation to the County Development Plan to go ahead- a move supported by most Councillors. Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development, Damien English TD, accepted the Planning Regulator’s decision, but Cork County Council are now contesting the decision. The issue is now before Minister English again and Deputy Cairns has urged the Minister to follow the decision of the Planning Regulator on this matter.

Holly explains:

“I raised the issue in the Dáil as it is important for good planning and we can ensure sustainable development. The Office of the Planning Regulator was established in response to historical poor planning and various tribunals. It has made an impartial and expert assessment and we need to follow that. Too often in Irish politics, the voice of experts are disregarded and people end up suffering. The Covid-19 emergency has demonstrated the importance of following expert advice - we have, and we have saved lives.”

“This is a test case for the role of the planning regulator. It is the first time that the regulator has made a formal recommendation to the Minister to direct a local authority to adhere to planning principles. Cork City Council have tried to make this about local democracy, but it isn’t. It is about a proper, robust planning system free of the interferences and cronyism of the past. We now have an independent regulator and the Minister is obliged to follow their recommendation, otherwise why have it?”

“I’m against the proposal because it will take business away from adjacent towns and villages - a point local business and community organisations agree with me on. It is also a car-dependant development at a time when we as a country are trying to take serious climate action. The County Council should be focusing all their efforts on supporting family-run shops and small business in towns and villages right now.”

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“There are also questions to be raised about the Council’s priorities. When I was a Councillor I tried to amend the County Development Plan to prevent the building of a plastics factory which was widely opposed by the local community, but my motion was shot down. Then, a few weeks later this proposed retail centre backed by a large British company was proposed. I couldn’t believe it. Who are we representing? This is why we need a planning watchdog.”

ENDS

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