

Dear Sir/Madam,

Our names are John + Mary-Jane Lalar. We are the son + daughter-in-law of the applicant. We are in our Thirties + live in Grennan Atkinson, Co. Laois.

I John, have farmed all my life + I was never interested in any other job. For as long as I can remember all I ever wanted was to finish school + work @ home. Even though I wanted to leave school after my Junior Cert my Mother insisted I finished the Leaving Cert. By then I had decided I wanted to do the agricultural course in Teagasc in Kildalton. I felt this would be of great benefit ^{to her} ~~Farming~~ in order to get the most from the land.

During these years I met Mary-Jane who was in the second year of her degree in college + when finished college went on to work as a Fund Accountant in an investment bank.

We got engaged in Nov 2013 after an 8 year relationship + got married in Oct 2014. After a long decision on where we would live after our wedding, we decided in April 2014 that we would do up the old derelict farmhouse that was situated on the land in Grennan which was purchased in Oct 2013. We worked really hard and we did the majority of the renovation ourselves to keep the cost down as this house was to be just a stepping stone until we got a chance to do up plans for our own house. We made the house habitable and we moved to Grennan in Nov 2014.

Like many newly married couples we had made a plan which included planning for a new house, and plan to start a family within 3 years. We were both very excited about starting the next chapter of our lives together.

Greenan is a small rural area which is part of the Ballyouskill parish + consists of a small country pub, church + post office. We were new to the area + through the local country church + pub we got a great opportunity to meet the locals. We have many great neighbours + we have made some great life time friends, both young + old.

In early 2016 we started working on plans for a new house. At that point we had decided to build in Greenan as we had made a lot of friends here, we were already living on the farm + we liked the area. There was an appropriate site on the original land near the local access lane opposite the complainants house. However by mid-year these plans were put on hold for a little while as our hearts + heads were not in it due to a family bereavement + other family commitments as my mother was not well.

In hindsight we were now at the turning point of our lives. Our stock numbers were high in 2016. The prices for the cattle in the spring/summer of 2016 were so bad we could not justify selling them at a great loss. We thought if we fed them for the winter we could sell them in early spring of 2017, and try make a small profit from them. However, unfortunately in the spring of 2017 there was an outbreak of T.B. in our herd + we were locked up by the Dept. of Agriculture which prevented us from selling the cattle until we had 2 clear T.B. tests as this is the routine protocol.

After feeding the cattle outdoor on a stand-off-pad in the winter of 2015, we thought it would not be ideal to do the same again in fear of another harsh winter + more viruses setting in which would be detrimental to the cattle. This was when we thought about building the shed to house + feed the extra animals for the winter.

The milking parlour in my home place in Ironmills, where my parents live, is an 8 unit parlour taking 3 hours both morning + evening to complete the milking. The land we have in Ironmills is of poor quality + is a lot wetter than the land in Grennon yet we were making more money from Ironmills from dairying than we were out of Grennon from beef. Dairying is more profitable than beef. This did not make financial sense with the huge loan repayment. It was from this that I thought if we built a milking parlour as part of this shed we could milk in Grennon which is more suited to dairy farming as all the land is banding each other + the cows did not need to be walked along a public road. Also due to the fact that I lived on the land + had planned on staying here this made the most sense for our future.

We went ahead and started the tanks of the shed after genuinely thinking we did not need planning permission. We based our plans off our shed in Ironmills which was the latest approved shed that we built back in 2008. In Sept 2016 we ceased all work after getting a letter from Laois County Council. At this stage it was just a tank in the ground. If advised differently we would have stopped all further works, applied for planning permission + waited for consent. However following Laois Co. Co. information + advice we continued with the shed + applied for retention + completion when the shed was built.

After the concerns raised by our neighbour initially, we tried to communicate and reconcile any problems that they may have had regarding the shed however they didn't want to talk it out with us. The shed was located at the furthest point of our existing farmyard with other approved sheds, silage pits, old storage houses and an old derelict farmhouse between it + the boundary line which is a ditch. At the other side of the ditch are their sheds, their milking parlour + their dwelling house. The shed in question cannot be seen from their house in fact only the sideroof of an old existing shed can be seen from their house. The same milk lorry with collection on the same days would be servicing both farms so we knew this could not be an issue. The only thing we could think of that this shed could possibly cause them to question it was the noise however we put in a Boratic milk pump on the machine. This cost an additional €14,000 but we felt if it addressed their concerns it was money well spent. A Boratic pump reduces the noise of the machine to minimal sound so once you ~~leave~~ leave the parlour you cannot hear the machine running. Therefore there is no noise from the machine at the neighbouring farmer's house.

After the Planning was approved by Leois Co. Co. it was appealed to An Bord Pleanála + while waiting for a decision from the appeal we decided to start re-evaluating our house plans. We reluctantly started to look at building an extension on the old house instead of doing a new build to cut back on some of the costs. This was a lot more difficult to plan as the layout of the existing house is bad + it is currently a cold, dark, + damp house so there were a lot of problems + issues to take into consideration. There were many plans drawn up but again these were put on hold when An Bord Pleanála's decision to refuse became known.

Since I did my course in Kildalton I was very keen + interested in modernising our farm in accordance to the recommendations set out on the course. There were grants available for developments for a 5 year period to young farmers who started to take over the farm. I had discussed different projects I was planning to incorporate onto our farm with other farming friends. However due to the uncertainty of the shed the finance wasn't there to fulfil the projects + avail of these grants + I was unable to progress. I have now seen these projects in action + working well on friends farms.

My father has explained the history + reasoning behind our decisions to build the shed and the advice we obtained at the time from Lewis Co. Co. so to save you some repetition I won't rewrite the same but this is my plea to you to ask you to help us get our lives back on track.

We have put our lives on hold because of this shed. we can't plan our own house due to not knowing what will be the outcome. All money is tied up. The cows that are being milked in this shed are the only form of

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I, Mary-Jane, have never known what real pressure was like until the last 3-4 years. I hate Mondays-Fridays fearing the news from the postman, I fear the phone ringing with more problems. I go to bed on Fridays with a sense of relief thinking no one will contact us for the weekend. By Sunday evening the fear is back again knowing we are facing another week. This is all due to the work involved around the shed with all the additional reports, costs + time, meeting deadlines and following up with professionals to submit reports. Waiting on results from the council and writing on an Bord Pleanála results. Then trying to understand what these results mean when they do come. There are so many sleepless nights and panic attacks due to the unknown.

Apart from the enormous costs, an extraordinary amount of work + time has gone into the researching of professionals hiring them, attending meetings, going through files with them and following up with them to get reports done and submitted on time to try + resolve the issues raised. You can see from our application history anything that was asked for when asked was provided + we did not sit on the fence. We were proactive in getting files submitted. This work was all done while still trying to hold down a full time job. It was so stressful trying to get time off work to attend last minute meetings + reviewing files before submissions. We are trying our utmost best to prove that we can overcome the issues raised.

I go milking with John in the mornings ~~is~~ before work + as many evenings as I can to try and keep him

encouraged. During the busy seasons I Milk the cows by myself so John can concentrate on the task in hand. This stress is so severe that I constantly worry for his life. Farming is a very lonely + isolated job @ the best of times. Even though John + his Father work together its not always physically together. The Majority of the day or even the Majority of the week the jobs involved are isolated. I take a bit of comfort knowing that when I am with him in the Parlor in the mornings + evenings I know he is safe and I am helping him shorten his work day. We have closely seen the effects Suicide has on a Family, a very close Friend + a member of the Farming community unfortunately + sadly took his own life due to the financial pressure becoming too much for him. To the outside world he looked like he had it all, a lovely home, his own Farm, + a beautiful Fiancee but no one knows what's behind anyone's closed door or whats in anyone's mind I now understand his reasoning as I can appreciate how stress + pressure can get so bad. The feeling of no way out is overwhelming.

IF this shed is removed there is no monthly income to pay back the loan + the banks will take ownership of the land, our livelihoods will be taking from us + our home will be taking from us. This stress is having a phenomenal affect on us both mentally + emotionally. We are working so hard every single day + depending on the outcome of your decision this could all be for nothing.

I believe the planning process is now being used in part to cause great difficulty + create hardship for us without regard to the fact that we are at great risk of losing our home + our livelihood. We are part of a small rural community + it is now openly and publicly discussed that "Labor's will take down the shed or will be financial ruined to retain it." Its noteworthy that in the submission of Liam Ryan Architect Services in 19/200 file, the complainant indicates they will not appeal any decision to An Bord Pleanála provided we construct a wall and cut off access to our farmyard by the public lane way. This clearly indicates the complainant case is not regarding the structure of the shed but the access to the farmyard that's being on the right of way from the public road forever. I further believe that submissions made by the complainant cannot be substantiated and are untrue.

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As a young couple we never signed up for this. All we wanted was to make an honest living + enjoy our time together with our families. We have such good friends + other neighbours around us which makes it easier as they all have our backs + disapprove completely with our current situation but life is extremely ~~through~~ tough right now and we can't keep living like this. We just want a fair chance, we want to be able to get up in the mornings + do our jobs, we just want to move on with our lives before it's too late.

We hope you will help us.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter

Yours sincerely

John & Mary-Jane Lator