# Gary McCausland’s coastal housing plan rejected again amid environmental concerns in Rostrevor



Property developer Gary McCausland has encountered a significant setback in his ambition to create a multi-million-pound housing development along the esteemed Rostrevor coastline. The Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s Planning Committee officially rejected his proposal for a 45-unit residential scheme, which aimed to repurpose a site featuring a former car dealership. This decision, made in June 2023, has now been upheld by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC).

The proposed development, located on Shore Road, has drawn considerable scrutiny since its inception in 2021. Local environmental advocacy group Rostrevor Action Respecting the Environment (RARE) voiced strong objections to the project, citing concerns over its potential detrimental impact on both the area's unique character and its ecological status. The site lies within the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, raising further concerns regarding any disruption to the local landscape and environment.

Commissioner Mandy Jones, in her decision on the appeal, underscored that the planned 45 residential units—including 33 apartments—clashed with the region's low-density design ethos and its natural topography. Her ruling also referenced inadequate provision of public open space and the development's proximity to the Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area and Rostrevor Wood Special Area of Conservation, both classified as areas of scientific interest. While acknowledging a past planning approval for a 70-bed nursing home and 41 apartments in 2017, she noted that this did not nullify the substantial objections rooted in current planning policy, which she deemed unacceptable.

This site has a contentious planning history; approval for the earlier development was controversially granted despite official recommendations for refusal. Critics argue that such decisions undermine the local environment, as they may lead to further overdevelopment. Nevertheless, McCausland has sought to reposition his efforts towards proceeding with the previously sanctioned project, which retains planning validity due to a certificate of lawfulness confirmed by the PAC.

Despite his setback, McCausland has previously expressed his commitment to affecting positive change in Rostrevor. Early statements from him indicated a desire to contribute meaningfully to the village through development initiatives. In light of ongoing pressures from local residents regarding housing affordability, especially as holiday homes increasingly encroach on the market, questions surrounding the adequacy of new housing schemes persist. Councillor Jarlath Tinnelly recently highlighted the urgent need for clear policies to ensure local families are not priced out by non-resident buyers.

As the debate continues over the balance between development and conservation in Rostrevor, McCausland's situation serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges facing developers in sensitive environmental contexts. The outcomes of such disputes will undoubtedly shape the future landscape, both in terms of built environments and ecological preservation. While McCausland's pursuit of new projects may still unfold, the local community’s concerns about safeguarding their environment will remain a pivotal aspect of subsequent planning discussions.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/business/tv-developer-fails-in-bid-to-overturn-planning-refusal-for-controversial-coastal-housing-scheme-WQFZOS5DYVGVTE3Q3YUXPDUNB4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/06/28/news/planning_permission_refused_for_housing_development_on_rostrevor_seafront-3390736/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/business/tv-developer-fails-in-bid-to-overturn-planning-refusal-for-controversial-coastal-housing-scheme-WQFZOS5DYVGVTE3Q3YUXPDUNB4/), [[3]](https://www.sundayworld.com/news/northern-ireland-news/former-tv-star-in-battle-with-local-council-after-they-shoot-down-housing-plan/a722089822.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/06/28/news/planning_permission_refused_for_housing_development_on_rostrevor_seafront-3390736/), [[4]](https://www.irishnews.com/business/2018/01/25/news/council-faces-legal-action-after-approving-controversial-co-down-development-1240901/), [[5]](https://www.outlooknews.co.uk/home/2021/02/16/news/exclusive-i-want-to-do-something-great-for-rostrevor-developer-speaks-out-as-opposition-mounts-to-apartment-plans-13478/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/business/tv-developer-fails-in-bid-to-overturn-planning-refusal-for-controversial-coastal-housing-scheme-WQFZOS5DYVGVTE3Q3YUXPDUNB4/), [[6]](https://www.newrydemocrat.com/news/2023/02/12/gallery/call-on-council-to-clarify-powers-available-to-mitigate-against-holiday-home-purchase-in-rostrevor-39348/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/business/tv-developer-fails-in-bid-to-overturn-planning-refusal-for-controversial-coastal-housing-scheme-WQFZOS5DYVGVTE3Q3YUXPDUNB4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/06/28/news/planning_permission_refused_for_housing_development_on_rostrevor_seafront-3390736/), [[3]](https://www.sundayworld.com/news/northern-ireland-news/former-tv-star-in-battle-with-local-council-after-they-shoot-down-housing-plan/a722089822.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/business/tv-developer-fails-in-bid-to-overturn-planning-refusal-for-controversial-coastal-housing-scheme-WQFZOS5DYVGVTE3Q3YUXPDUNB4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2023/06/28/news/planning_permission_refused_for_housing_development_on_rostrevor_seafront-3390736/> - In June 2023, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Planning Committee rejected a proposal for a 45-unit residential development along Rostrevor's Shore Road. The site, currently housing a car salesroom, is situated between Carlingford Lough and Rostrevor Oakwood. The council cited concerns over the development's impact on the local character, environmental quality, and residential amenity, noting the area's designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The developers, Richland Group, expressed disappointment but indicated plans to proceed with a previously approved development comprising 41 apartments and a nursing home.
3. <https://www.sundayworld.com/news/northern-ireland-news/former-tv-star-in-battle-with-local-council-after-they-shoot-down-housing-plan/a722089822.html> - Gary McCausland, a former TV presenter and property developer, is engaged in a planning dispute with Newry and Mourne District Council over a proposed housing and apartment complex in Rostrevor, Co Down. The council rejected the application for 33 apartments and 12 houses, citing concerns about overdevelopment and the project's impact on the village's low-density, rural character. McCausland plans to appeal the decision and proceed with an alternative development approved in 2017, which includes 41 apartments and a nursing home.
4. <https://www.irishnews.com/business/2018/01/25/news/council-faces-legal-action-after-approving-controversial-co-down-development-1240901/> - In January 2018, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council faced legal action after approving a controversial development in Rostrevor, Co Down. The project, proposed by JC Campbell, involved a 70-bed nursing home and 41 apartments on the site of a car dealership. Despite recommendations for refusal from planning officials, the council granted permission. The conservation group Rostrevor Action Respecting the Environment (RARE) applied for a judicial review, challenging the council's decision and highlighting concerns over the development's impact on the adjacent ancient oak woodland.
5. <https://www.outlooknews.co.uk/home/2021/02/16/news/exclusive-i-want-to-do-something-great-for-rostrevor-developer-speaks-out-as-opposition-mounts-to-apartment-plans-13478/> - In February 2021, Gary McCausland, CEO of Richland Group, expressed his commitment to a proposed development in Rostrevor, Co Down, despite facing significant opposition. The plan, known as the Waterfront Ecovillage, aimed to transform the former JC Campbell car showroom site into a mixed-use development. McCausland emphasized his dedication to the village and the project's potential benefits, countering criticism from local campaign group Rostrevor Action Respecting the Environment (RARE), which opposed the development due to concerns over its scale and impact on the local environment.
6. <https://www.newrydemocrat.com/news/2023/02/12/gallery/call-on-council-to-clarify-powers-available-to-mitigate-against-holiday-home-purchase-in-rostrevor-39348/> - In February 2023, Councillor Jarlath Tinnelly called on Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to clarify measures in its local development plan to prevent properties along the south Down coast, including Rostrevor, from being purchased as holiday homes by non-local buyers. Tinnelly highlighted the issue of local families being priced out of the housing market due to the influx of holiday home purchases, and urged the council to implement policies that would ensure housing remains affordable and accessible to local residents.
7. <https://www.postandcourier.com/columbia/news/lower-richland-landowners-fight-development-push-for-nature-preserve-instead/article_29657860-15d9-11ee-b678-4b3fca3458fe.html> - In Lower Richland County, South Carolina, landowners are opposing a proposed development and advocating for the establishment of a nature preserve instead. The development, which includes new housing, has faced resistance from local residents concerned about its impact on the environment and community character. The landowners argue that preserving the area as a nature reserve would better serve the community's interests and protect local wildlife habitats.