



## Board Direction

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**Ref: PL07.246529**

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a Board meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

The Board decided to refuse permission generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, and in accordance with the draft reasons and considerations set out below.

### REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Having regard to the location of the proposed development within an area having a residential zoning objective in the Gort Local Area Plan 2013 - 2019, and within an area identified by the Environmental Protection Agency as being at very high risk from domestic waste water pollution, and to the proximity of public services, it is considered that the proposal to service the development by means of a septic tank in particular and also a well, by itself and by the undesirable precedent it would set for similar development, would constitute disorderly and haphazard development, would be prejudicial to public health, and would exacerbate a risk of environmental pollution. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is considered that the proposed development would result in substantial changes to the characteristic features, form and proportions of this vernacular building. As proposed on the submitted drawings, this includes the removal of the central chimney to facilitate a stairs, the raising in height of the front dormers, which alters their subservient position relative to the roof, the raising of the dormer windows resulting in an excessive gap between upper and lower windows on the front elevation, the removal of the characteristic front plastering, the removal of simple plaster framing around windows and either side of the front elevation of the house, and the alteration of the front porch. In the absence of survey drawings, neither is the Board satisfied that the height of the building would not be increased relative to its width, including the raising of the roof. It is considered that such substantial alterations would result in the removal of almost all the features of interest of an attractive traditional farmhouse and the changing of its proportions, such that the resulting house bears only a superficial resemblance to the original. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed rear extension would be excessive in width, having a form and proportions that fail to appropriately reflect those of the existing building, with a discordant pattern of fenestration that also has an overly-horizontal emphasis, and an incongruous roof configuration. The form and proportions of the existing building result in a harmony evident in much vernacular architecture, which would be absent from the proposed development. Notwithstanding that the existing building is not a protected structure, it is considered that the removal of almost every architectural feature of interest of this attractive vernacular house would eradicate its character, and together with the proposed extension, would contravene Objective AH 6 of the Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, in failing to protect vernacular built heritage. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
  
3. Having regard to the potential for the existing structure to be used by bats, and in the absence of any survey information or proposed mitigation measures, the Board is not satisfied that the proposed development would not be likely to be seriously detrimental to bats, a protected species. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Objective NHB 1 in relation to protected habitats and species, as set out in the Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
Fionna O' Regan