

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Direction
BD-010561-22
ABP-310660-21

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a Board meeting held on 25/04/2022.

The Board decided to refuse permission, generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, for the following reasons and considerations.

Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to:

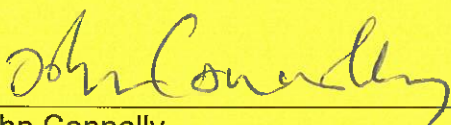
- a) the location of the site within a rural area identified as being under strong urban influence in accordance with the 'Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in April, 2005;
- b) National Policy Objective 19 of the National Planning Framework (February 2018) which, for rural areas under urban influence, seeks to facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstratable economic or social need to live in a rural area, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements,
- c) the provisions of the Westmeath County Development Plan, 2021-2027 which provide for consideration to be given to the development of rural housing in areas under strong urban influence for those with a definable social or economic need to live in the open countryside,

the Board is not satisfied, on the basis of the information on the file, that the applicants come within the scope of either the economic or social housing

need criteria as set out in the overarching national guidelines or the definition of a person with strong links to the area and who is an intrinsic part of the rural community in accordance with the relevant criteria set out in the current development plan for the area. The proposed development, in the absence of any identified locally based need for the house at this location, would result in a haphazard and unsustainable form of development, would contribute to the encroachment of random rural development in the area, would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and the efficient provision of public services and infrastructure, and would undermine the settlement strategy set out in the development plan. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is the policy of the planning authority as set out in the current development plan to control urban sprawl and ribbon development. This policy is considered to be reasonable. The proposed development would be in conflict with this policy because, when taken in conjunction with existing and permitted development in the vicinity of the site, it would consolidate and contribute to the build-up of ribbon development in an open rural area. This would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and the need to maintain a clear distinction between the urban area of Athlone town and its rural hinterland, would lead to demands for the provision of further public services and community facilities, and would be detrimental to the visual amenity and rural character of the surrounding area. The proposed development would, by itself and the precedent it would set for further such development, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Board Member


John Connolly

Date: 25/04/2022