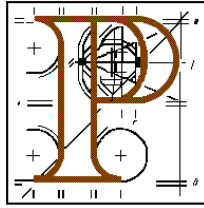


# An Bord Pleanála



## Inspector's Report

PL05E. 246873

**DEVELOPMENT:** Additions and alterations to house

**ADDRESS:** Strath na Corca, Doirí Beaga, Co. Dhún na nGall

### PLANNING APPLICATION

**Planning Authority:** Donegal County Council

**Planning Authority Reg. No.:** 16/50574

**Applicant:** Máire Anne Howard

**Application Type:** Permission

**Planning Authority Decision:** Refuse permission

### APPEAL

**Appellant:** Máire Anne Howard

**Type of Appeal:** 1<sup>st</sup> party vs. refusal

**Observers:** None

**DATE OF SITE INSPECTION:** 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016

**INSPECTOR:** Stephen J. O'Sullivan

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report deals with a first party appeal against a decision of Donegal County Council to refuse permission for alterations to a house in the countryside.

## **2.0 SITE**

- 2.1 The site is in a rural area on western seaboard. It has a stated area of 0.738ha. It is occupied by a single storey house with an L-plan. There is another older building that functions as an outhouse on the site. The stated floor area of the existing buildings is 122m<sup>2</sup>. The area has a dense settlement pattern of houses laid out along parallel tracks that run up the slope from the county road. The house on the site is the furthest from the road on its particular track and on the highest ground. The ground continues to slope upwards behind the site.

## **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 It is proposed to extend the house by 33m<sup>2</sup> at ground floor level and 44m<sup>2</sup> on a new first floor level. The ground floor extension would include a sunroom. The two storey part of the extended house would have a roof ridge height of 6.89m. Certain alterations would be made at ground floor level to provide larger windows on the southern and western sides of the existing house. The extended house would be connected to the waste water treatment system previously authorised under 14/51257.

## **4.0 POLICY**

- 4.1 The Donegal County Development Plan 2012-2018 applies. Objective RH-O-5 seeks high quality design and the successful integration of new rural housing into the landscape.

## **5.0 HISTORY**

- 5.1 Reg. Ref. 14/51257 – The planning authority granted permission for a domestic garage and wastewater treatment system on the site and refused permission for a two storey extension to the house.

Reg. Ref. 15/50875 – The planning authority refused permission for a two storey extension to the house on the site.

## **6.0 DECISION**

6.1 The planning authority decided to refuse permission for a single reason which stated that the proposed development would, by virtue of its height, its orientation relative to the previous extension, and the extensive fenestration proposed, result in a visually incongruous low quality development that would be out of character with the parent dwelling and would not successfully integrate with it.

## **7.0 REPORTS TO THE PLANNING AUTHORITY**

7.1 Planner's report – The height, orientation, design and excessive fenestration of the proposed extension would be out of character with the existing vernacular house. Permission should be refused.

## **8.0 GROUNDS OF APPEAL**

8.1 The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows-

- The design of the proposed development meets the requirements of the development plan and the guidelines for housing in the countryside. It represents good design practice with respect to passive house design and building technology. The applicant's agent sought advice from the planning authority following the refusal of the previous application, but it was not forthcoming.
- The house is over 100 years old. It included a two storey element which was demolished over 30 years ago. It was a characteristic of local buildings to have higher and lower elements. Four surviving examples within a kilometre are cited. It was the practice to build houses on higher ground, and these four are at a similar elevation to the appeal site, with the back of the house towards the prevailing wind from the south-west. This illustrates that the planning authority was incorrect to regard the proposed design as visually incongruous, out of character or that it would not successfully integrate.
- The site lies on sloping ground with higher ground to the rear and north. There are mature trees to the south. Distant views are available to the east, the south and partially to the west. The design concept takes account of insolation, with extensive glazing facing south-east and south-west, and a limited extent facing east, west and north. The design is conservative, with a simple pattern of fenestration at first floor level.

Privacy is protected by the rising ground to the north, the mature trees and the hedgerow between the site and the nearest neighbour 85m to the west.

- Photographs are submitted that show houses in the vicinity that establish design context for the site. Two storey houses on higher ground are widespread, often on the side of the hills. There is variation in housetype, and many houses have extensive glazing.
- The applicant is concerned with the future of the building. When an historic building is being extended, it is preferable for there to be a clear distinction between the old and new elements, so that both are authentic to their period. This was attempted in the application 15/50875 but it was refused. That design was the most appropriate from the perspective of the application, the site and the public good. As a result of the refusal, the amount of space and amenity afforded the applicant was reduced. Alterations to the original house are now required to meet the needs of the applicant as the proposed extension is smaller. The applicant has compromised and would be concerned at the implication of a further negative decision.

## **9.0 RESPONSES**

9.1 The planning authority's response can be summarised as follows-

- The scale and design of the proposed extension do not follow the modest scale and vernacular design of the two storey elements of the houses shown in the photos submitted with the appeal.
- The orientation, design and excessive fenestration of the proposed extension detract from the vernacular form and character of the existing house.

## **10.0 ASSESSMENT**

10.1 The existing house is comprised of an older cottage with a restrained and sympathetic extension on a perpendicular axis whose scale, form and design respect and complement the character of the original building. The extension proposed in this application would not be so respectful. The identity of the original cottage would be much less clear if the proposed development were carried out, as the form and layout of the extended house would be larger and

more complex, and its south facing elevations would be characterised by extensive windows. The position adopted by the planning authority therefore has considerable merit.

10.2 Nonetheless the house is at a considerable distance from the public road. It is a relatively small feature in an extensive landscape. It has a certain level of screening from the trees in front of it and the context of rising ground to its rear. As argued in the appeal, houses with single and two-storey elements have precedents in the area's vernacular architecture. The proposed additions would have pitched roofs and would be attached to the newer part of the house, leaving the structure of the older cottage relatively intact. In these circumstances, it is not considered that the visual impact of the proposed works to the house on the site would have a significant negative impact on the character of the area or its built heritage or its residential amenities. The proposed development would therefore be in keeping with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATION**

12.1 I recommend that permission be granted subject to the conditions below.

## REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Having regard to the situation of the existing house in the landscape and its distance from the public road, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed extension would not cause significant injury to the character of the area, its residential amenities or its built heritage. The proposed development would therefore be in keeping with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## CONDITIONS

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2. The external finishes of the proposed extension (including roof tiles/slates) shall be the same as those of the existing dwelling in respect of colour and texture. Samples of the proposed materials shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

**Reason:** In the interest of visual amenity

3. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works.

**Reason:** To ensure adequate servicing of the development, and to prevent pollution.

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Stephen J. O'Sullivan  
23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016