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Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report 05E.248952.

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<b>Development</b>	Change of house design and relocation of dwelling house previously approved under 16/51725.
<b>Location</b>	Longfield, Lettermacaward, Donegal.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Donegal County Council.
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	17/50737.
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Rachel Boner.
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission.
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Refuse
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	First Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Rachel Boner.
<b>Observer(s)</b>	None.
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	02 <sup>nd</sup> of November 2017.
<b>Inspector</b>	Karen Hamilton.

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

1.1. The site is located along the western coastline of rural County Donegal within the townland of Longfield, Lettermacaward, north of The Glenties. The subject site is on an elevated plateau of lands which are visible along the surrounding road network and the existing pattern and design of dwellings in the vicinity and along the road is of modest single and storey and half dwellings which have similar heights. The site is flat and at a similar level to the road and adjacent dwellings along the road. Planning permission has been granted for a single storey dwelling under Reg Ref 16/51725.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development relates to a change of house type of a one-off rural dwelling which may be summarised as follows:

- Reconfiguration of the two main blocks of the dwelling,
- Increase in the length of the southern block by c. 1.5m.
- Increase in the scale of the centrally linked corridor,
- Additional fenestration elements to the buildings elevations,
- Increase in the height of the main blocks from 6.4m to 6.7m,
- Increase in the FFL by 0.5m,
- Decrease in distance of the front building line to the public road, c. 0.4m.
- Inclusion of an integral garage.

## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

### 3.1. Decision

Decision to refuse permission as the proposed new design was for an unwarranted increase in the mass and scale of the proposed dwelling to the extent that it represents a significant intrusion on the visual amenities of the scenic rural area and would therefore materially contravene objective RH-0-5.

### 3.2. **Planning Authority Reports**

#### 3.2.1. Planning Reports

The report of the area planner reflects the decision to refuse permission and states that the cumulative impact of the alterations and change in design are significant and the increase in mass and scale is unacceptable in this sensitive location.

#### 3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Environmental Health Officer (HSE) - No objection subject to conditions.

### 3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

None requested.

### 3.4. **Third Party Observations**

None submitted.

## 4.0 **Planning History**

### **16/51725**

Permission granted for a single storey (6.4m) high, U shaped type dwelling, interconnected by a corridor. The report of the area planner refers to the reduction in the size and scale of the proposed dwelling which is appropriate to the site, following extensive preplanning.

## 5.0 **Policy Context**

### 5.1. **County Donegal Development Plan 2012-2018**

The site is located within a Structurally Weak Rural Area and Rural Housing Need is subject to compliance with Policy RH-P-4.

#### **Objective RH-0-5**

To promote high design quality and the successful integration into the landscape of new rural housing.

### **Policy RH-P-1**

Proposals for individual dwellings shall be subject to the application of Best practice in relation to siting, location and design of rural housing as set out in Appendix B and shall comply with Policy RH-P-2.

### **Policy RH-P-2; Location and Design of dwelling**

1. No suburban pattern
2. Will not create or add to ribbon development,
3. Would not be detrimental to amenity of adjoining residents,
4. Would not be prominent in the landscape,
5. A proposed dwelling be unacceptable here it fails to blend with the landform or natural features of the site or include extensive infill of the site.

### **Policy T-P-15**

A proposed dwelling will be unacceptable where it is prominent in the landscape.

### **Appendix B Building a House in Rural Donegal. A Location Siting and Design Guide.**

- Location: The new dwelling shall fit into the countryside and integrate satisfactory with the environs. It shall also protect and conserve the views.
- Siting: A site analysis should investigate how the dwelling will site with the topography, orientation, boundary and entrance/access.
- Design: The linear plan form of historic rural reference, modest in scale with a vertical emphasis is preferred.

## **5.2. Natural Heritage Designations**

The site is located approx. 285m from the edge of the West Maas Ardara Road Special Area of Conservation (site code 00197).

## 6.0 The Appeal

### 6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The grounds of appeal are submitted from the applicant and may be summarised as follows:

- The original design of the dwelling is retained as much as possible and the amendments refer to an increase in the height by 300mm (6.4m to 6.7m) and integrated garage.
- The amendments proposed still retain a simple vernacular architectural design.
- The proposed development still complies with Policy RH-O-5 as it promotes high design quality and the successful integration of the dwelling into the surrounding landscape.

### 6.2. Applicant Response

The applicant is the first party appellant.

### 6.3. Planning Authority Response

The response from the planning authority may be summarised as follows:

- A previous planning permission was withdrawn (15/1646) as permission was sought for a dwelling which was considered completely out of character with the existing and established development of the area.
- Under plan ref 16/51725 an acceptable design was submitted which the received landscape could accommodate without suffering a detrimental impact.
- The current proposal which seeks to increase the scale, footprint, height and mass of the dwelling represents an unacceptable increase as the cumulative impact is a significant intrusion on the scenic rural area and therefore contrary to Policy RH-P-1 and RH-P-2 and objective RH-O-5 of the development plan.

## 6.4. Observations

None received.

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. The main issues of the appeal can be dealt with under the following headings:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the Visual Amenity
- Appropriate Assessment

### **Principle of development**

7.2. The proposed development is for a change of house design and relocation of a dwelling previously granted under Reg. Ref 16/51725. The applicant is the same as the previous permission and local needs, access and issues with water and waste water were dealt with appropriately by the planning authority under the parent permission. Therefore, based on the parent permission and subject to complying with other policies and objectives of the development plan, detailed below, I consider the principle of development at this location acceptable.

### **Impact on the Visual Amenity**

7.3. The proposed alterations include an increase in the size and scale of a previously permitted rural dwelling (Reg. Ref 16/51725), single storey with two blocks interconnected by a single storey link and located on a flat elevated scenic site along the west coastline of County Donegal. The amendments include an increase in the height of the dwelling from 6.4m to 6.7m, to accommodate an additional floor, relocation of the dwelling towards the road (4m) and an increase in the FFL by 500mm. Further amendments to the design of the dwelling include an increase in the length of the rear section by 4.4m to accommodate an integral garage, increase in the front section by 1.4m and increase in the link between the blocks from a single storey to a two storey. The floor space of the permitted dwelling was 200m<sup>2</sup>, the proposed floor space is 453m<sup>2</sup>, inclusive of the garage. The reason for refusal relates to the significance of these amendments and the impact on the visual amenity of the area which contravene Policy RH-0-5 of the development plan where

it is an objective to “*promote the successful integration into the landscape of new rural housing*”. The grounds of appeal consider the amended design is sympathetic to the existing rural environment and the inclusion of the overall changes do not alter the design of the dwelling significantly as it remains a simple vernacular design.

- 7.4. Objective RH-O-5 and Policy RH-P-2 of the development plan provides guidance for the appropriate location of new rural dwellings, where the proposed dwelling should blend with the landform and natural features of the site. The policies and objective of the development plan also refer to detailed design guidance in Appendix B: “*Building a House in Rural Donegal. A Location Siting and Design Guide*,” which requires the new dwelling to integrate with the topography of the site, the characteristics of the surrounding area and be linear in form which is modest in scale. In addition, Policy T-P-15 of the development plan refers to an unacceptable design where the dwelling is prominent in the landscape.
- 7.5. As previously stated the subject site is a flat, elevated scenic site along the coastline and those dwellings at either side are modest in scale and mainly single storey. Other dwellings located along this local road are similar in style aside for an old farm house set back further from the road. The proposed location of the dwelling closer to the road front would not significantly alter the current building line although in conjunction with the other amendments the dwelling, this change has the potential to impact the adjoining dwelling. The submitted contextual images and section drawings illustrate the scale of the proposed changes and I consider the cumulative impact of the amendments, including an additional 253m<sup>2</sup> floor space, increase in the FFL (500mm), increase in height (0.3m) and length of the dwelling would significantly increase the scale and bulk of the proposed dwelling. I note the guidance in the development plan requires integration into the landscape and surrounding environment and I consider based on the characteristics of the site and the cumulative impact of the amendments the proposal would have a significant impact on the area and the proposed development would not be in keeping with the scale and mass of the existing dwellings.
- 7.6. Therefore, having regard to the cumulative impact of the proposed amendments, the scenic nature of the existing site and the modest design of the dwellings in the vicinity, I consider the proposed development would not be in keeping with the guidance provided for in Objective RH-O-5, Policy RH-P-1, RH-1-2 and Appendix B

of the development plan and would have a significant negative impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

### **Appropriate Assessment**

- 7.7. The subject site is located approx. 285m from the edge of the West Maas Ardara Road Special Area of Conservation (site code 00197). The site is not connected to the designated site by any hydrology and, as permitted under Reg. Ref 16/51725 the site can be serviced by a public water supply and a packaged wastewater treatment system, therefore there is no potential risk for groundwater or surface water pollution. The planning authority undertook a screening assessment of the proposed development for Reg. Ref 16/51725, which I have assessed and I consider reasonable.
- 7.8. Therefore, having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, the conservation objectives and distance from the European Sites, it is reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on the West Maas Ardara Road Special Area of Conservation (site code 00197) , or any other European site, in view of the sites conservation Objectives, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

- 8.1. Having regard to guidance in the current development plan, the scale, location and design of the proposed dwelling, it is considered that, based on the reasons and considerations below, the proposed development would have a negative impact on the visual amenities of the area and the proposed development would be contrary to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- 8.2. It is recommended that the proposed development is refused for the reasons and considerations as set out below.



## 9.0 Reasons and Considerations

It is considered that, by reason of its height and bulk, the proposed two-storey house would be visually obtrusive in this scenic and elevated site along the coastline of County Donegal, which is characterised by modest single-storey houses. The proposed development therefore, if permitted, would be contrary to Objective RH-O-5, Policy RH-P-1, RH-1-2 and Appendix B of the County Development Plan, 2012-2018 and to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

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Karen Hamilton  
Planning Inspector

06<sup>th</sup> of November 2017