



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL20. 249223

Development	Forest road
Location	Evikeens. Boyle, Co. Roscommon
Planning Authority	Roscommon County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	PD17/143
Applicant	Coillte Teo.
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant permission
Type of Appeal	Third Party
Appellants	Noel and Maura Casey
Observers	Pat and Maureen O'Reilly Seamus Casey
Date of Site Inspection	14 th November 2017.
Inspector	Stephen J. O'Sullivan

1.0 Site Location and Description

1.1. The site is in a rural area c2km north-west of the centre of Boyle, Co. Roscommon. Its stated area is 0.2294ha. It consists of a strip of land with between an area of coniferous forestry and a county road that is c340m long with a typical width of 6m. Its southern end runs along the eastern side of the curtilage of a house beside the county road. The vehicular access to that house is on this boundary. There is an existing agricultural access from the county road. At the time of inspection it appeared that this access had been recently widened towards to east. The county road at this location is c3m wide. Its vertical and horizontal alignment and its surface condition could be described as poor. It joins the Regional Road R295 c860m to the south-west of the site. There are several one-off houses along the intervening stretch of the county road.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. It is proposed to lay an access road for forestry c340m long, with a typical width of 3.6m. The southern part of the road would widen to a bellmouth c18m wide at the access from the county road, with the additional land required taken from the field to the east of the access. An access to the agricultural land to the east would be provided from the proposed access road near the county road. The site layout plan indicates that the haul route would be to the west of the junction.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

The planning authority decided to grant permission subject to 6 conditions. Condition no. 3 required a traffic management plan to be submitted prior to the commencement of forestry operations.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The report on the initial application stated that the development was acceptable in principle, having regard to section to the policy at section 9.35 of the county development plan, subject to traffic safety considerations. The county road is lightly trafficked and adequate sightlines at the proposed junction are shown on the site layout plan. A letter of consent for the setback of the hedge to the east is required from the relevant landowner. The agricultural access should be moved further down the proposed access track, as advised by the Roads Section. Details of traffic movements are also required. In relation to residential amenity and the matters raised by third parties, the scale of the proposed development and the limited frequency of traffic mean that the development is acceptable in this regard. Should permission be granted a condition requiring the repair of any damage to the road would be recommended, along with one requiring a traffic management plan. Further information was sought regarding traffic levels, consent to setback the adjoining hedgerow, and the relocation of the agricultural entrance further down the proposed road. The subsequent planner's report noted that the further information included a haul route to the national road network, but not details on the number and type of traffic movements, and letters of consent to setback the hedgerow but not to relocate the agricultural access. Nevertheless, after an inspection of the site and consultation with the Roads Section, the proposed development was considered acceptable and a grant of permission was recommended.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

The report from the Roads Section stated no objection to the proposed development subject to a number of conditions, including the relocation of the agricultural access, the repair of damage to the road and the submission of a temporary traffic management plan in respect of forestry extraction. A email from the section after the submission of further information re-iterated that it had no objection to the development.

3.3. **Third Party Observations**

Submissions were made objecting to the development on grounds similar to those raised in the appeal. A submission from the occupier of the house beside the site indicated that they did not object to the development in principle, provided adequate

control was exercised over the traffic using it and the fabric of the public road and their access to it was protected.

4.0 Planning History

No previous planning applications were cited by any of the parties.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020 applies. Section 9.35 of the plan refers to forestry. It states that the planning authority will seek to ensure that access from forestry development to the public road for felling and thinning does not compromise traffic safety. Section 9.38 states that visibility splays for accesses onto local roads will be determined on a site specific basis, with a stipulation of 90m unless a road safety audit justifies a relaxation.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

None. The nearest Natura 2000 sites are the SAC at Bricklieve Mountains and Keshcorran, and the SPA and SAC at Lough Arrow, both of which are c4.5km to the north of the appeal site.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

- Unauthorised works have already been carried out at the access to the county road
- The proposed development would involve a very significant intensification of use with HGVs using a track originally designed for carts.
- The proposed development would constitute a traffic hazard because the visibility available to the west of the proposed access is less than the standard

of 90m. The sightlines at the junction of the county road and the R295 are also inadequate.

- The structure and alignment of the public road is inadequate to cater for the heavy traffic that would occur after the proposed development, and its width would not allow vehicles to pass each other.
- The proposed forest road could potentially serve a very large area of forestry. This issue should be addressed in a properly considered overall plan for the extraction of timber in the area.

6.2. **Applicant Response**

The applicant did not respond to the appeal.

6.3. **Planning Authority Response**

The planning authority did not respond to the appeal.

6.4. **Observations**

The submitted observations object to the proposed development on grounds similar to those raised in the appeal.

7.0 **Assessment**

- 7.1. The proposed development would not introduce activity into the area that would generate traffic. The forestry that requires servicing is already established there. Such exploitation of natural resources in the countryside necessarily requires the use of the rural road network of the area in which it occurs, which will invariably include roads that were not constructed in accordance with modern standards. The alignment and width of the county road to which the proposed forest access road would link would constrain the speeds of heavy vehicles upon it, and thus diminish the traffic hazard that they would cause. The narrow, winding character of the county road means that heavy vehicles upon them could cause inconvenience to other road users. However the road is lightly trafficked. The traffic that the forestry would generate would be episodic rather than continual, and would be under the

supervision of applicant. As such it would be amenable to control by a traffic management scheme agreed with the planning authority under a condition attached to a planning permission. For the same reasons the risk of damage to the fabric of the road that might be caused by heavy vehicles using the proposed access road could be mitigated by an obligation imposed on the applicant or developer under a planning condition. Subject to such conditions, which are similar to those included on the planning authority's decision to grant permission, the proposed development would not give rise to traffic hazard or undue inconvenience to other road users, nor would it seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

- 7.2. The proposed development would not be in or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site. It would involve a relatively small amount of physical works and would not alter the prevailing landuses in the area. The nearest Natura 2000 sites (the SAC at Bricklieve Mountains and Keshcorran, and the SPA and SAC at Lough Arrow) are not downstream of the appeal site and no hydrological or ecological pathways lie between them. Having regard to these circumstances no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.
- 7.3. Some works pursuant to the proposed development may have been carried out on the site. However because the development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment or on any Natura 2000 site, this would be a matter to be addressed under the enforcement procedures set out in Part VIII of the planning act and would not preclude consideration of the current application in the normal way.

8.0 Recommendation

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

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the particular and limited role of the proposed access road in servicing established forestry in the vicinity of the site, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions below, the proposed development would not give rise to traffic hazard or undue inconvenience to road users and that it would not be likely

to seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity. It would therefore be in keeping with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted on the 27th day of July 2017, 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. Any damage to the public road, verge or public facilities caused by the development or by traffic using the authorised forest road access shall be fully reinstated by the developer at their own expense to the satisfaction of Roscommon County Council.

Reason: To prevent damage to the public road in the interests of traffic safety

3. Prior to the commencement of forestry operations on the applicant's land in the vicinity of the site, the developer shall agree a traffic management plan with the Planning Authority. Such a plan shall include measures to reduce disruption on the public road and damage to same, and shall include full detail of all movements by heavy goods vehicles and their proposed haul routes.

Reason: In the interests of traffic safety

4. Surface water from the site shall not be permitted to drain onto the adjoining public road.

Reason: In the interest of traffic safety

5. The developer shall engage with any relevant utility providers to ensure overhead lines traversing the site are not compromised by the development.

Reason: In the interests of public safety

6. The developer shall give the Planning Authority two weeks' notice in writing of their intention to commence development on the site.

Reason: In the interests of orderly development.

. Stephen J. O'Sullivan
Planning Inspector

5th January 2018