

Inspector's Report ABP-301564-18

Development	Construction of a bungalow dwelling, septic tank and percolation area, recessed entrance and all associated siteworks.
Location	Drinnanstown North, Rathangan, Co. Kildare
Planning Authority	Kildare County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	17/898
Applicant(s)	William Magnier
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant permission
Type of Appeal	Third Party
Appellant(s)	Andrew Moloney
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	24 th August 2018
Inspector	Michael Dillon

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site, with a stated area of 3.98ha (part of a larger landholding of 6.98ha), is located in a rural area some 2.5km northeast of the village of Rathangan, in north Co. Kildare. The site is located between the 80m and 90m contours on ground which rises gently from the road in a southerly direction. The 80kph speed restriction applies in this area. The L7004 local road is wide enough for two cars to pass with care. There are no public footpaths and there is no public lighting. Sight visibility in either direction at the recessed agricultural entrance is good. There is a substantial amount of one-off housing in the area particularly to the east and southeast.
- 1.2. The site itself is roughly rectangular, and forms approximately half of a larger grassed field. The field was dry under foot on the date of site inspection. There is a large range of modern farm buildings with plastered walls (unpainted), and pressed metal roof in the southern portion of the site on rising ground. These buildings are reached via an hardcore track from the recessed agricultural entrance. The land is surrounded by agricultural land except to the northwest, where there is a two-storey house on a triangular site between the appeal site and the access road. There is a quarry entrance immediately opposite the access to the appeal site. The quarry is almost entirely surrounded by screen planting and is only visible from the higher (southern) section of the appeal site. The field, of which the appeal site forms roughly half, is surrounded by mature hedgerows with good mature trees, which effectively hides the site from view from almost all points. There are 10kV power lines traversing the southwestern portion of the appeal site.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. Permission sought on 9th August 2018, to erect a single-storey bungalow of 180m² and an overall ridgeline height of 6.1m. The applicant is indicated as being the owner of the land. External walls are to be nap plaster finish, with a fibre cement pitched tile roof. The site already contains a range of agricultural buildings – set further to the south at a slightly higher level. A recessed agricultural entrance is to be used to serve the proposed development. It is proposed to connect to the public mains in the public road to the north. Foul waste is to be discharged to a septic tank and percolation area. Surfaced water is to be discharged to a soakway.

- 2.1.1. The application was accompanied by the following documentation of note-
 - Details of property ownership.
 - Details of the applicant's connection with the area.
 - Completed Rural Housing Planning Application Form.
 - Site characterisation form for foul drainage.
 - 2.2. Following a request for additional information, revised proposals were received on 9th January 2018, to include the following-
 - Reduction in height of ridgeline to 5.5m.
 - Relocation of house 20m further to the north.
 - Landscaping plan.
 - Further details of applicant's landholding and family interest and planning permissions in the area.
 - The applicant currently resides in converted stables on this landholding.
 - Developments and uses on surrounding lands including photographs.
 - 2.3. Following a request for clarification of additional information, revised proposals were received on 13th March 2018, in relation to the history of family landholding in this area and necessity for sale. The submission also agrees to future sterilisation of folios KE64441F and KE54477F.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

By Order dated 9th April 2018, Kildare County Council issued a Notification of decision to grant planning permission subject to 21 no. conditions – the principal of which can be summarised as follows-

- 1. Development to be carried out in accordance with plans and particulars submitted on 9th August 2017, and 9th January and 13th March 2018.
- 2. Seven-year occupancy condition.
- Sterilisation agreement required for lands in holding of the applicant folios KE54477F and KE64441F.

- 18-19. Relate to septic tank and percolation area.
- 21. Requires payment of a development contribution of €8,994.

4.0 **Planning History**

There is a substantial history pertaining to this site, and adjoining family lands.

Ref. 17/1453: Permission granted to Brendan Cawley for alterations to stables accommodation previously granted permission ref. 01/1372, at Boston Common. [This relates to the curtilage of the applicant's father's former house].

Ref. 16/716: Permission refused on 10th March 2017, to William Magnier, for a dormer dwelling on this site. The applicant was stated to be the owner.

Ref. 15/457: Permission granted to Mary Graham (applicant's mother) on 3rd February 2016, for retention of house at Boston Common, granted permission ref. 00/1787, and upgrade of effluent treatment system on site of 0.328ha. The applicant was stated to be the owner.

Ref. 15/434: Refers to an incomplete planning application by Mary Graham (applicant's mother) for retention of house at Boston Common, on site granted permission ref. 00/1787.

Ref. 14/820: Permission refused on 13th November 2014, to William Magnier for a dormer dwelling on the current appeal site. The applicant was indicated as being the owner of the site.

Ref. 08/2013: Permission granted on 17th September to Donal Magnier for stables, farm buildings and secondary effluent treatment system on a 6.1ha [elsewhere 6.91ha] site, which included the current appeal site. These buildings were constructed. Donal Magnier was indicated as being the owner. The current applicant is stated to reside in part of the range. The buildings, as constructed, are not the same as those for which permission was granted.

Ref. 08/1223: Permission refused on 26th August 2008, to Donal Magnier for a dormer bungalow, stables, farm buildings on a 6.1ha [elsewhere 6.91ha] site, which included the current appeal site. Donal Magnier was indicated as being the owner.

Ref. 05/2410: Retention permission granted to Mary Graham (applicant's mother) for stable block on site to east of current appeal site.

Ref. 01/1372: Permission granted to Donal Magnier on 24th July 2002, for stables development at Boston Common.

Ref. 01/769: Permission granted on 9th January 2002, to Mary Graham (applicant's mother) for dwelling and stables at 1.33ha site at Boston Common and Feighcullen townlands. The site was stated to be in the ownership of Leo Price. This development was carried out, but stables were not built in accordance with permission. [I note that a portion of this site was indicated as being in the ownership of the current applicant's father, D. Magnier Senior, in relation to sterilisation of lands for file ref. 99/283].

Ref. 00/1787: Permission granted to Juliette Magner (applicant's stepsister) on 6th June 2001, for dwelling at Boston Common. The application form states that the site was a gift from her father. The house was built, but not in accordance with permission.

Ref. 00/1319: Permission granted to D. Magnier (applicant's father) on 15th August 2001, for retention of stables and outbuildings and relocation of dwelling and all buildings in present form at Boston Common. This development was carried out.

Ref. 99/283: Permission granted to Donal Jonathan Magnier (applicant's stepbrother) on 15th March 2000, for house at Boston Common (on the 5.06ha landholding of his father). This house was constructed. Condition 3 required sterilisation of lands outlined on blue on a drawing received by KCC on 9th December 1999. These lands are indicated on a map to the east of the applicant's father's 5.06ha landholding, but indicated as being in the ownership of D. Magnier Senior. A house for the current applicant's stepsister was subsequently built on these lands outlined in blue – ref. 00/1787.

Ref. 98/74: Permission granted to Daniel Magnier (applicant's father) on 12th August 1998, to construct dwelling and stables at Boston Common. The area of the landholding was stated to be 5.06ha. The applicant's address was given as College Wood Park, Clane, Co. Kildare.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

The relevant document is the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023. Section 4.12 deals with housing in rural areas. The site is located within Rural Housing Policy Zone 1 (that area of the county under strongest pressure, arising from proximity to Metropolitan Dublin). Section 4.12.7 states-

Rural generated housing demand will be managed having regard, *inter alia*, to the applicant's genuine local need, together with the protection of key economic, environmental, natural and heritage assets, such as the road network, water quality, important landscapes, habitats and the built heritage. In order for an applicant to be considered for a one-off dwelling in the rural area of Kildare, an applicant must:

(A) Meet one of the following categories of applicant:

1. A member of a farming family who is actively engaged in farming the family landholding.

OR

2. A member of the rural community.

AND

(B) Meet one of the local need criteria set out in Table 4.3 (a) and (b) Schedule of Local Need.

Category Of Applicant 2

A member of the rural community.

The applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside close to their family home by reason of immediate family ties or their active and direct involvement in a rural based enterprise.

Local Need Criteria

Rural Housing Policy Zone 1

(i) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Kildare as members of the rural community and who seek to

build their home in the rural area on their family landholding and who currently live in the area. Where no land is available in the family ownership, a site within 5km of the original family home may be considered.

(ii) Persons who have grown up and spent substantial periods of their lives (12 years) living in the rural area of Kildare, as members of the rural community who have left the area but now wish to return to reside near to, or to care for immediate family members, seeking to build their home in the rural area on the family landholding or on a site within 5km of the original family home.

(iii) Persons who can satisfy the Planning Authority of their commitment to operate a full time business from their proposed home in the rural area where they have existing links to that rural area and that the business will contribute to and enhance the rural community and that the nature of such enterprise is location dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location.

Policy RH3 states-

Require applicants to demonstrate that they are seeking to build their home in the rural area in Kildare for their own full time occupation. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they do not own or have not been previously granted permissions for a one off rural dwelling in Kildare and have not sold this dwelling or site to an unrelated third party, save in exceptional circumstances.

Policy RH4 states-

Restrict residential development on a landholding, where there is a history of development through the speculative sale or development of sites, notwithstanding the applicant's compliance with the local need criteria.

Policy RH5 states-

Restrict occupancy of the dwelling as a place of permanent residence for a period of seven years to the applicant/occupant who complies with the relevant provisions of the local need criteria.

Policy RH18 states-

Ensure that planning applications for a rural dwelling on the basis of the establishment of a full-time viable commercial equine or other rural enterprise on site will generally be favourably considered, having regard to the following criteria: (i) The landholding shall comprise a minimum of 5 Hectares.

(ii) All other siting and design considerations will be taken into account in assessing the application.

(iii) It must be demonstrated that the nature of the enterprise is location dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location.

5.2. Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities

These April 2005 Guidelines, identify the site as being within an "Area Under Strong Urban Influence". Housing in these areas should be restricted to persons who are an intrinsic part of the rural community or persons working in farming or rural enterprise.

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is located approximately 5.6km to the west-northwest of Moulds Bog SAC (Site code 002331) and some 5.8km to the northwest of Pollardstown Fen SAC (Site code 000396). The Grand Canal, some 1.0km to the north, is a Natural Heritage Area (Site code 002104).

6.0 The Appeal

- 6.1. The appeal from Andrew Moloney, Boston Cottage, Rathangan, received by An Bord Pleanála on 8th May 2018, can be summarised in bullet point format as follows-
 - The area is overdeveloped with houses and country roads are under strain.
 - The number of septic tanks in the area place the supply of water from wells at risk.
 - The site is at the bottom of Boston Hill where there is a listed view.
 - The applicant and his family have moved from this area for over a year, and currently reside in Waterford. The applicant does not work in the area and has no need to reside in the area. The applicant has not demonstrated compliance with the rural housing policy.

- The applicant's family has sold 4 / 5 houses from their land holding with the occupancy condition having been lifted in some instances.
- Permission has been refused on this site on three occasions. It was recommended for refusal again by the case planner, but somehow approved at management level within KCC.
- 6.2. The appeal is accompanied by the following documentation of note-
 - Copy of original letter of objection to KCC.
 - Annotated map showing planning applications on the family landholding.

7.0 **Response Submissions**

7.1. 1st Party Response to 3rd Party Appeal

- 7.1.1. The response of William Magnier, was received by An Bord Pleanála on 31st May 2018. Page three of a four-page submission was withdrawn by the applicant (by letter received by An Bord Pleanála on 12th July 2018). I confirm that I did not have sight of the withdrawn page 3 the file having been referred to me only on the 14th August 2018. I note that the agent for the applicant, Declan Kearns & Associates Ltd, e-mailed An Bord Pleanála on 16th July 2018, requesting that the cover letter which accompanied the 1st Party response to the grounds of appeal, be removed from the appeal file. I can confirm that I did not have sight of this original covering letter either the file having been referred to me on 14th August 2018. The remaining three pages of the appellant's response submission can be summarised in bullet point format as follows-
 - The appellant does not live at Boston Cottage, and has not lived there for over one year. Having left the house, it was vandalised, and is now derelict.
 - Roads in the area are not under strain and are in good condition.
 - There is a public water supply in the area, and there has been for a number of years past. The applicant does not know of any wells in the immediate area.
 - The applicant's site is located between Callan's Recycling and Flanagan's quarry.

- The applicant's father is in poor health and did move to Waterford last year to stay in a house belonging to one of his brother's. The applicant's parents have no house of their own. The applicant intends looking after both his parents in his house if he can get planning permission. The applicant currently works for a firm of Galway builders, but once he gets his business started, he will have to find work closer to home.
- The applicant's girlfriend resides only 1.5km from the site, and the applicant sometimes stays at her house.
- The applicant's parents got into serious financial difficulty during the recession, and have not recovered from it.
- All information sought by the planning authority was submitted in relation to the landholding. The land the applicant owns now was bought in 2008 by his parents with the money they had left over from the sale of their original landholding. The applicant cannot sell this land, as he would not get a deposit for another house.
- The applicant's stepsister bought her site from a third party it does not form part of the family landholding. Following family difficulty, she was forced to sell the partially-completed house and move to Clane. The applicant's parents occupied his stepsister's house for a while, after selling their own, and completed the house.
- The appellant no longer lives in the area. He seems to know a vast deal about the family history and yet the applicant has never spoken with him.
- 7.1.2. The response submission is accompanied by the following-
 - Four coloured (and annotated) photographs.
 - Letter from KCC confirming that Donal Magnier (father of applicant) is eligible for social housing.
 - Copy of doctor's letter relating to the health of the applicant's father.

7.2. 2nd Party Response to 3rd Party Appeal

There was no response received from Kildare County Council.

8.0 **Observations**

None received.

9.0 Assessment

9.1. Rural Housing Requirement

- 9.1.1. There is an extensive planning history attaching to the applicant and his family in this area not just in relation to the current appeal site, but also to lands to the east and southeast in Feighcullen and Boston Common townlands. Permission has been granted since 1998 (around which time the family moved to this area), for four houses to members of the applicant's immediate family father, mother, stepbrother and stepsister. All houses were built, and all have now been sold on due to family business difficulties and other family reasons. The family no longer reside in this area although the applicant claims to reside in a stables building on the site. One site, Folio KE15384 would appear to have been retained from the original 5.05ha original family holding at Boston Common. The current 6.98ha field was stated to have been acquired by the applicant's parents in 2008, with money left over after the sale of the original family landholding immediately to the southeast.
- 9.1.2. The applicant has not previously been granted permission for a house in this area. It is clear from documentation submitted that he has connections to the area and was largely brought up in the area (since 1998). The applicant has submitted photographs of internal alterations to an existing agricultural building on the site, so as to make it habitable. These alterations would appear not to have the benefit of planning permission. The applicant currently works for a firm of Galway builders, but intends to set up a business on these lands the exact nature of which is not stated other than that the land will be operated as fully organic.
- 9.1.3. This area of County Kildare is under strong pressure for housing arising from proximity to metropolitan Dublin. There is a considerable cluster of one-off houses at Boston Common and Feighcullen townlands to the east and southeast of the current appeal site evident from perusal of any recent OS map for the area or aerial photograph. This has resulted in the suburbanisation of this area, without any of the accompanying services normally available in a suburban area such as sewers,

footpaths, public lighting and other community facilities and commercial services. The proposed development, whilst not immediately abutting the concentration of houses referred to above, could tend to the northwestward expansion of this area – there being houses located to both the east and north of the field in which permission is now sought. The development of a further house in this area would lead to demands for the uneconomic provision of community services and facilities by the local authority.

- 9.1.4. The Development Plan refers to genuine local need, where the applicant is a member of the rural community and meets one of the local need criteria set out in Table 4.3 (a) and (b). Such an applicant must demonstrate a genuine local need to reside close to their family home by reason of immediate family ties or their active and direct involvement in rural based enterprise. The current applicant would not appear to meet the requirements, as his family have sold houses and moved away from the area, and there is no active and direct involvement in a rural-based enterprise. This land is not a family landholding having been acquired by the applicant's parents sometime around 2008. The applicant is not returning to care for immediate family members such members having moved away from the area the reason stated being economic necessity. The applicant has provided no details of commitment to operate a full-time business from his landholding one which would contribute to and enhance the rural community, and the nature of which is location-dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location.
- 9.1.5. I would not consider that the applicant has established a rural housing need at this particular location.

9.2. Layout & Design

9.2.1. The application form states that the area of the site, as outlined in red, is 3.98ha. The total landholding, as outlined in blue is state to be 6.98ha. There is currently no eastern boundary to the site as outlined in red. This field was stated not to have formed part of the family landholding when the original family house was constructed – ref. 98/74. Permission was granted for the relocation of this dwelling ref. 00/1319 on 15th August 2001.

- 9.2.2. The proposed house on the current appeal site was relocated some 20m further to the north, by way of additional information submission of 9th January 2018. The house is located in the centre portion of a 3.98ha site. There is a range of farm buildings, recently constructed, further to the south on rising ground. The combined locations of the farm buildings and the house most certainly do not make for the most efficient use of this agricultural land the positions making the manoeuvrability of machinery for cultivation and harvesting less than optimal. The farm buildings are located on higher ground, and are, therefore, more dominant particularly as they comprise large sheds. The house, located lower down in the site will not appear so dominant. The field in which the site is located is almost entirely surrounded by mature hedgerows which contain mature trees. The only real view into the site is from the existing agricultural entrance off the L7004 county road. I would see no difficulty with the site layout on purely visual grounds with reservations in relation to the efficient use of agricultural land.
- 9.2.3. The proposed bungalow design was altered by way of additional information submission of 9th January 2018. The ridge-line height was reduced to 5.5m. The house is modest in size, and I would see no difficulty with the design.

9.3. Access

There is an existing agricultural access serving this site. The access is recessed. The 80kph speed restriction applies in this area. There are no public footpaths and there is no public lighting. There is an entrance to an active quarry immediately opposite the existing agricultural entrance. Sight distance in either direction at the agricultural access is good – providing that the hedgerows on either side are kept trimmed. Most of the L7004 is wide enough for two vehicles to pass with care. The appeal refers to the carrying capacity of the local road network, stating that it is substandard. There is a substantial cluster of houses to the east and southeast of the appeal site at Boston Common, which take access from the L7004 and from the L3002 larger county road to the southeast. The surface of local roads is good, at present. There are no community facilities in the immediate vicinity of the site – which will necessitate car journeys to access the most of basic of services.

9.4. Water

9.4.1. Water Supply

The water supply is stated to be from public mains located within the L7004. The agricultural buildings to the south on this site are provided with water. The applicant states that he is not aware of any public wells in the immediate vicinity. Irish Water had no objection to the proposal.

9.4.2. Foul Waste

The development is to be provided with a septic tank and percolation area. The applicant claims to reside in the agricultural buildings to the south. No indication is given of where foul waste from this building is discharged – but it is likely to be to a septic tank and percolation area permitted ref. 08/2013 – immediately to the south of the stables building. The occupation of this building for residential purposes would appear to be unauthorised. The Site Characterisation Form, which accompanied the planning application, indicated that no groundwater was encountered within 2.4m of ground level (the depth of the trial hole). The site was certainly dry under foot on the date of site inspection by this Inspector. The groundwater aquifer in the area is indicated as being 'LI' – Locally Important Aquifer – Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones. The vulnerability of the aquifer is 'High' – the middle category (3) of five – arising from proximity of rock to the surface. There was no evidence of any rock outcrop on the site. There is no indication given of any public or group water supply source in the immediate area. The Water Services Department and Environment Section of KCC had no objection to the proposal.

9.4.3. Surface Water

There are no watercourses within or on the site boundaries. Surface water is to be discharged to soakways downslope of the house. There is no likelihood that discharge of surface water would impact on adjoining sites or on the L7004. Arising from the sloping nature of the land, the site would not be prone to flooding. I would see no difficulty with the arrangements proposed.

9.5. Other Issues

9.5.1. Financial Contribution

KCC applied a financial contribution (condition no. 21) requiring payment of €8,994. If the Board is minded to grant permission, a condition should be attached requiring payment of a development contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme of KCC.

9.5.2. Appropriate Assessment

The site is neither within nor immediately abutting any European site. The closest site is 5.6km distant. There are no surface water hydrological links with any European site. Having regard to the scale of the proposed development and it location in relation to the nearest European site, 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.

9.5.3. Extraneous Matters

Claims have been made in relation to personal animosity between parties to the appeal. It is not proposed to have regard to any of these assertions. This application is judged on its planning merits. The location of a quarry some distance to the north and a recycling facility some distance to the southwest, are not relevant planning considerations in relation to the granting of planning permission for a house on this site.

9.5.4. Listed Views

The appellant claims that there is a listed view which would be impacted by the proposed development. Scenic Route No. 8 (as indicated in Table 14.5 of the Development Plan) states- 'Views of Bogland Plains; L3002 from Kilmoney Cross Roads to Feighcullen Cross Roads at Boston Hill'. Having regard to the almost complete screening of the site from view from public roads, and the distance from the L3002, I would be satisfied that the proposed development would not impact on any scenic view.

9.5.5. Precedent

The fact that planning permission has previously been refused on this site to the applicant and to his father, is not a determining factor in the consideration of the application and appeal currently before the Board. Each case must be dealt with on

its merits. It is open to any applicant to reapply for planning permission, to try to overcome reasons for refusal which may have been stated in any previous decision of the Planning Authority or the Board.

9.5.6. Sterilisation Agreement

Condition 8 of the Notification of decision to grant planning permission required the applicant to enter into a sterilisation agreement in relation to the 6.91ha field (of which the appeal site forms part) as represented in two Folios – KE54477F and KE64441F. The applicant had agreed to this by letter received by KCC on 13th March 2018. I note that Folio KE54477F was originally in the ownership of the applicant's mother, Mary Graham, and was then acquired by the applicant on 23rd March 2013. This folio relates to the current appeal site. The remainder of the field to the east, is within Folio KE64441F. This land is indicated as being in the ownership of the applealed by the applicant. If the Board is minded to grant planning permission, it would be appropriate to attach a similarly worded condition.

9.5.7. Status of Appellant

The applicant claims that the appellant no longer resides in the area. This is not a relevant consideration. The appeal was accepted as valid by An Bord Pleanála.

10.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission be refused for the reasons and considerations set out below.

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

 The proposed development would materially contravene the rural housing policy of the planning authority, in that the applicant has failed to establish a need to reside in this area by reference to operation of a full-time business from his landholding – one which would contribute to and enhance the rural community, and the nature of which is location-dependent and intrinsically linked to a rural location. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. 2. The proposed development would tend towards the advancement of suburbanisation, in an area which has already been subject to extensive one-off housing, and which lacks basic services such as sewers, public footpaths, public lighting and community services/commercial facilities to serve such a housing concentration. The granting of permission for a further house, could lead to demands for the uneconomic provision of such services and facilities. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Michael Dillon, Planning Inspectorate.

28th August 2018.