



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-303782-19

Development	7 no. dwelling houses
Location	The Maples, Lisroyne, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon
Planning Authority	Roscommon County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	18585
Applicant(s)	Patrick J & Margaret Cunningham.
Type of Application	Permission.
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Patrick J & Margaret Cunningham.
Observer(s)	None.
Date of Site Inspection	29 th April 2019.
Inspector	Sarah Lynch

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located c. 1.2 km to the south west of Strokestown town centre, to the rear of an existing housing development known as the Maples. The site is enclosed by a wire fence and gate along the boundary with the existing housing development and a mature treeline and hedgerow along the western and northern boundaries. Existing dwellings to the south of the site are bounded by a closed boarded timber fence.
- 1.2. The site is currently under grass and the topography is relatively flat. The site is directly adjacent to the green area of the existing development. An insignificant amount of construction material is present on the site and includes items such as piping. Semi-mature trees have been planted in the green area of the existing development and the access roads have been laid and finished up to the access of the appeal site.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. It is proposed to construct 7 no. detached dwellings.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Permission was refused for the following reason:

Having regard to the proposed site location on lands zoned 'Residential Reserve' as set out in the Strokestown Area Plan 2014-2020, which states in relation to residential development on lands that; In depth development of these lands will be considered appropriate when:

- (a) All lands zoned 'new residential' have been developed.
- (b) All lands zoned 'new residential' have been subject to a grant of planning permission (extant planning permission), and there is a demonstrable demand for further new residential development within the plan area, it is considered that the proposed development is premature insofar as lands zoned 'New Residential' remain undeveloped and there is no demonstrable demand for further new residential development within the Plan area. Accordingly, the

proposed development if granted would contravene the provisions for residential development as set out in the aforementioned Strokestown area plan and as such would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

- The planners report was consistent with the decision of the local authority.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Housing Section – no objections

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- None

3.4. Third Party Observations

- None

4.0 Planning History

PD10/3003 Permission was granted for an extension of duration of planning permission 04/2173.

PD05/878 Permission was refused for change in house type.

PD04/2173 – Permission was granted for 39 dwellings

5.0 Policy and Context

5.1. Development Plan

Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020

- Section 5.8 Housing in designated settlements (Tier 1-3 settlement hierarchy).

- Section 5.8.2 The Release of Urban Residential land and the Residential Reserve.

Strokestown Area Plan 2014-2020 – (as contained within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020)

- Section 6 – Residential Development.
- Table 1 – Residential phasing and land allocation.
- Table 2 – Zoning areas for the Strokestown Area Plan.
- Section 6.1 - Planning policies in relation to residential development.
- Policy 6.4 Locate residential development in suitable areas closest to town core area.
- Policy 6.5 Support and encourage the habitation of abandoned housing stock by assisting in the provision of services.
- Specific Objective SO1, SO4, SO6, SO7 Endeavour, in as far as practicable and in partnership with the various stakeholders, to achieve the completion and occupancy of residential developments as indicated on Map 2 and labelled SO1, SO4, SO6 and SO7

Vacant Homes Action Plan for County Roscommon 2017-2021

Geo directory figures for vacancy levels as updated in 2017 recorded 77 no. vacant residential properties in Strokestown resulting in an overall vacancy rate of 14.78% for the town.

National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

- Section 2.6 – Securing compact and sustainable growth.
- Section 6.6 Housing

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009

- Section 2.3 Sequential approach.
- Section 6.3 New development should contribute to compact towns and villages.
- Section 6.7 Location and site selection.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

None

5.3. EIA Screening

5.4. Having regard to the limited nature and scale of the proposed development and the absence of any connectivity to any sensitive location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

A first party appeal has been submitted by Cunningham Design & Planning on behalf of the applicants Patrick J & Margaret Cunningham the issues raised can be summarised as follows:

- Applicants own a site to the south east of the N5 which is also zoned residential reserve and have obtained planning permission to complete the development in 2017.
- There is a site-specific objective associated with both the appeal site and the other site the applicant owns, which seeks the completion and occupancy of these sites (SO6 &SO7).
- Works have been carried out to enable the taking in charge of the estate across the road.
- The undeveloped lands have been fenced off in the Maples in order to secure the site for development.
- The development provides for a mix of housing.
- Proposal contributes to the regeneration of the area.
- Proposal is supported by government and local policy.

- Development will complete and enhance the estate.
- Refusal contradicts Roscommon Co.co decision to grant permission on site opposite as per PD17/02.
- Proposal would not be put forward if there was not a demand for it.
- Strokestown has a role in offsetting unsustainable demand for rural housing.
- Strokestown can take the overflow from Athlone and Sligo.
- No objections were received from local residents.

7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. This a first party appeal against the Local Authority decision to refuse planning permission on the grounds that the proposal is located on lands identified as 'residential reserve'. The issue for consideration before the Board therefore, is solely in relation to the principle of the development, I am satisfied that no other substantive issues arise in this case. Appropriate Assessment will also be considered. The issues raised can therefore be summarised as follows:

- Principle of development.
- Appropriate Assessment
- Other Matters

Principle of development

7.2. The proposed development is located on lands zoned as residential reserve as identified within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020. It is stated within Section 5.8.2 of the said plan that such lands will be suitable for development during the period of the plan when:

- (a) All lands zoned 'New Residential' have been developed; or
- (b) All lands zoned 'New Residential' have been subject to the grant of planning permission (extant planning permission), and there is demonstrable demand, supported by factual evidence, for further new residential development within the Plan area.

7.3. It is acknowledged by the applicant within the grounds of appeal that neither scenario has occurred, the existing 'new residential' lands remain undeveloped and without

planning permission. Notwithstanding this, the applicant contends that there is a demand for the proposed dwellings. It is contended that Strokestown has a role in offsetting unsustainable urban generated housing in the rural area and will absorb overflow housing demand from Athlone and Sligo. I note that no evidence has been submitted to substantiate that such a demand exists.

- 7.4. The applicant refers to permission granted at the Lisnaree housing development to the south of the N5 in which the local authority permitted 7 dwellings under reference PD/17/02. It is contended by the applicant that the local authority has effectively contradicted itself by refusing permission on the appeal site. Permission was granted on the Lisnaree site based on the provisions of objective SO7 of the Strokestown Area Plan, which seeks the completion and occupation of the development. It is stated that the appeal site is subject to a similar objective, SO6, and should therefore be granted on the same basis.
- 7.5. Whilst I acknowledge that the completion and occupation of such housing estates is an overriding objective of the Council, as per SO6 and SO7. It is not the intention of these objectives to circumvent the order of development as outlined within the County Development Plan. Development must continue to occur in an orderly and appropriate manner in accordance with the provisions of both the Development Plan and government guidance.
- 7.6. It is important to note at this juncture, that The Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009, require undeveloped lands closest to the core and public transport routes to be given preference. Roscommon County Council zoning map for Strokestown provides the statutory basis for such orderly development. 'New residential' lands are identified within this map at sites no more than c. 600 metres of the town core. These lands remain undeveloped and without planning permission.
- 7.7. The appeal site is located c. 1.2 km from the town core, to permit development at this location would result in leapfrogging over more sequentially preferable sites. The practice of 'leapfrogging' results in dispersed and fragmented settlements and is contrary to both the sequential approach as required within the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009 and National Strategic Outcome 1 of the National Planning Framework in terms of compact

development. Section 6.6 of the NPF identifies such types of development as costly. It further states that this scattered form of development hampers effective responses to climate change and is seen as having an overall negative impact on people's health and wellbeing.

7.8. The development of the appeal, site by virtue of its location removed from the town core in which there are appropriately zoned undeveloped sites would give rise to a haphazard approach to the release of lands which would be contrary to the provisions of both the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009 and the zoning objective of the site as set out within the Strokestown Area Plan contained within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020.

7.9. As mentioned above the applicant contends that there is a demand for the proposed housing, it is important to note the following when considering the proposed development in the context of demand:

- Population growth for the inter-censal period of 2011-2016 amounted to 11 persons for the settlement, rising from 814 persons to 825.
- The Vacant Homes Action Plan for County Roscommon 2017-2021 has identified 77 vacant homes within Strokestown as of 2017.
- The core strategy allocations within the county development plan project a population increase of 104 persons up to 2020 and have allocated 44 units to cater for this growth.
- The draft Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the northern and western region, population growth rates for Roscommon County are predicted to rise by c. 10% which would provide for an increase of c. 83 persons in Strokestown up to 2026.

7.10. Overall, given the limited population growth, the significant level of residential vacancy recorded within the town and the availability of appropriately zoned lands within and adjacent to the town core, I am not satisfied that there is a demonstrable need for the development of the appeal site at this time. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020, the overriding principles of the National Planning Framework and the

requirements in relation to such developments within the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas 2009.

Appropriate Assessment

- 7.11. Having regard to the nature of the development, its location in a serviced urban area, and the separation distance to any 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.

Other Matters

- 7.12. It is outlined within the grounds of appeal that the applicants have engaged with Roscommon County Council in relation to works required to take both estates in charge and have completed all works required in relation to the Lisnaree estate as well as cleaning up the appeal site and securing it with fencing.
- 7.13. I noted the works carried out by the applicant in cleaning up the site at the time of inspection and note that this has greatly improved the visual amenities for existing residents.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1. Having regard to the foregoing assessment I recommend that permission is refused for the following reason:

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

The proposal would provide new residential development on lands identified as 'Residential Reserve' within the Strokestown Area Plan as contained within the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020. Section 5.8.2 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020 permits the development of such lands only when (a) all lands zoned 'new residential' have been developed or (b) all 'new residential' lands have been subject to a grant of planning permission and there is demonstrable demand supported by factual evidence for further new residential development within the Plan area. This is reasonable. 'New Residential' lands within the Strokestown settlement remain undeveloped and without extant planning

permissions, the proposed development would therefore be considered premature and would be contrary to both the zoning objective for the site and to the provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2014-2020. The proposal would also be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Sarah Lynch
Planning Inspector

5th June 2019