



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-306371-20

Development	Extension and modifications to house together with all associated site development works.
Location	The Coach House, Castle Hill, Carlingford, Co Louth
Planning Authority	Louth County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	19868
Applicant(s)	Liam Lynch & Michele Connolly.
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Liam Lynch & Michele Connolly.
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	13 th of March 2020.
Inspector	Karen Hamilton

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site includes a small stone dwelling located on the edge of a regional road (R173) north of the village of Carlingford, Co. Louth. The dwelling is an old coach style building with brick facades and slate roof. A three storey apartment block is located immediately to the rear and side of the site “Stella Maris”. The parking and open space area is located on the opposite side of the local road, shared with another dwelling.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development would comprise of the following:
- Extension to an existing dwelling (140m²) including demolition of part of the existing dwelling (52m²).

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Decision to refuse permission for three reasons as summarised below:

1. The “Coach House” consists of a 19th Century former coach house and is considered an important vernacular building in a prominent location adding to the visual amenity of the landscape.

Policy SS 30 of the development plan requires sensitive refurbishment of vernacular dwellings and buildings,

Policy SS 34 requires refurbishments to enhance the form, character and architectural features of the existing building and not have any adverse effect,

Policy SS 35 requires new extensions to be sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style of materials of the existing building.

The proposed demolition removes a substantial part of the original fabric and coupled with unacceptable intervention the character of the vernacular building would be lost and therefore materially contravene SS 30, 34 & 35 and HER 58.

2. The proposed development would increase the boundary and elevation heights in such proximity to Stella Maris along a common boundary that it would have a significant negative impact on the residential amenity of these apartments by way of overshadowing and overbearing.
3. The site area (424m²) includes a piece of land opposite the site of Castle Hill, physically detached from the “Coach House”. The stated area of the site is only 140m² and therefore a 4 storey height building on a limited site is deemed overdevelopment.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The report of the area planner reflects the decision to refuse permission and notes the following:

- Unacceptable design, scale and form of the proposed works,
- Loss of vernacular fabric, the policies of the development plan and the impact on the visual amenity and streetscape in the vicinity,
- The significant negative impact on the residential amenity of Stella Maris by way of the location causing overbearing and overshadowing.
- The proposal by way of scale of a restricted site would be overdevelopment.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

None requested.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

None requested.

3.4. Third Party Observations

None received.

4.0 Planning History

None of relevance.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National Policy

- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DAHG, 2011)

5.2. Louth County Council Development 2015-2021

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The site is located within the boundary of Carlingford Village as “Village Centre” where it is an objective *“To provide, protect and enhance village centre facilities and enable town centre expansion”*.

Section 2.19.8 Refurbishment of Existing Dwellings and Vernacular Buildings in Rural Areas

SS 30- To encourage the sensitive refurbishment of existing vernacular dwellings and buildings in the interest of preserving the built heritage of County Louth

SS 33- To ensure that the design of the proposed refurbishment does not erode the siting, setting and character of the existing building

SS 34- To require that the reuse or refurbishment would maintain or enhance the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality

SS 35- To require that any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style and materials of the existing building

Section 5.14 Historic Building Stock

HER 58 “To recognise the importance of the contribution of vernacular architecture to the character of a place and promote where feasible the protection, retention and appropriate revitalisation and use of the vernacular built heritage, including

structures that contribute to landscape and streetscape character and discourage the demolition of these structures”

5.3. **Natural Heritage Designations**

The site is located c. 100m to the west of the Carlingford Shore SAC (002306) and c.400m to the west of Carlingford Lough SPA (004078).

5.4. **EIA Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development 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**

The grounds of appeal are submitted from the applicant in relation to the refusal by the PA and the issues raised are summarised below:

A Design Method Statement is submitted with the grounds of appeal which:

- Provides a breakdown of the proposed works and justification for the proposed extension including a historic analysis of the site and the area.
- Includes similar examples of modern extensions onto traditional buildings.

Item 1

- The proposed development does not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the locality.
- The proposed development is in accordance with polices of the development plan.
- The Coach House is not a protected structure or located within an Architectural Conservation Area.

- There is no limitation to the amount of demolition of the original structure and the amount proposed is sufficient to maintain the character of the area.
- The roof is a contemporary intervention built in 2001, as are the windows.
- The Design Method Statement includes the roof set back.
- The sun terrace is a required area for the well-being of the occupants.
- The apartment development already subsumes the Coach house which is particularly dark at the rear.
- The rear section of the Coach House does not add anything to the character of the area and the Stella Maris warps around the site.
- The proposed development is sympathetic to the scale, massing, architectural style and materials.

Item 2

- The site is urban in context and issues such as proximity, height and boundaries should be addressed in this context.
- Issues such as context are addressed in the Design Method Statement.
- The proposal do not represent a negative impact and the apartments own block is four storeys in height and overlooks the appeal site.

Item 3

- The site to the front and subject site are both owned by the applicant.
- The option of locating the sleeping portion of the house on the opposite side of the road was considered although it was felt the context and proximity to “King Johns Castle” would not be logical or sensitive.

6.2. Applicant Response

The applicant is the appellant.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

A response from the Planning Authority noted no further comment and referenced the planning report on the file.

6.4. Observations

None received.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. The applicant submitted an application for an Oral Hearing on the proposed development. The Board has decided that there is sufficient written evidence on the file necessary to enable an assessment of the issues raised.

7.2. I consider that the main issues in this case are as follows:

- Design, Form and Layout
- Impact on Residential Amenity
- Appropriate Assessment

Design, Form and Layout

7.3. The proposed development relates to the extension and alteration to an existing two storey dwelling which is located along the edge of the R173, an access road from the north into the village of Carlingford. The dwelling, the “Coach House” has the appearance of an old coach house, with dark bricked facades, timber windows and slate roof.

7.4. The proposed development includes the removal of internal walls, the renovation of the interior of the dwelling and a rear extension. The proposal includes substantial works to the existing dwelling, with 52m² of demotion where the dwelling is currently 103m² and the construction of a rear extension, 4 stories in height and 191.50m² in size. The front façade of the dwelling, along the main road, will remain. The external material is contemporary in style with a light render finish and large expanse of glazing.

7.5. The PA first reason for refusal relates to the impact of the proposed development on the visual amenity, in particular the streetscape and the form and character of the existing dwelling. The PA makes specific reference to polices in the development plan SS 30, 34 & 35 which require the sensitive restoration of vernacular buildings in rural areas. Additional reference to historic building stock, HER 58 and structures that

contribute to landscape and streetscape character and discourage the demolition of these structures, is also detailed in the first reason for refusal.

- 7.6. The grounds of appeal note the overall design and scale of the building and the absence of any statutory protection on the dwelling such as a Protected Structure or Architectural Conservation Area. In addition, the location in an urban context is considered more relevant than a rural location. It is considered that the design and set back will maintain the character and setting of the site. The grounds of appeal also note construction of the existing roof in 2001 and the contemporary intervention of the pitched roof profile.
- 7.7. The location and design of the existing “Coach House” adds to the character of the area and enhances the streetscape of a regional route into the village of Carlingford. The retention of the existing façade along the front of the site onto the public road will ensure minimal alteration to the immediate streetscape. The proposed rear extension will increase by c. 6.7m, protruding above the existing roof profile of the “Coach House” and effectively doubles the height of the building. The rear extension is set back from the front gable and is generally in line with the adjoining apartment building. As stated above the extension is contemporary in style.
- 7.8. Policies SS 30, 34, & 35 require the sympathetic alteration to vernacular buildings throughout the rural area of Louth, where any refurbishment would maintain or enhance the character and architectural features. The protection of vernacular architecture is also detailed in Policy HER 58. Although the grounds of appeal argue the location as urban, I consider those policies relating to vernacular architecture is still applicable to villages within the rural area of the County and those buildings of interest within. Vernacular buildings are typically simple and practical and whilst I do not have any specific objection to the design of the extension, I consider in the context of the original gatehouse it is excessive and would have a significant negative impact on the character of the existing dwelling and in turn the streetscape.
- 7.9. The PA third reason for refusal relates to the overdevelopment on the site. The grounds of appeal refer to the use of car parking to the front of the site, also in the ownership of the applicant. The current dwelling utilises the majority of the site area at present. I consider the scale and massing of the development has the greatest significant negative impact on the surrounding area.

7.10. Therefore, having regard to the existing characteristics of the “Coach House”, the size and scale of the proposed development including the height of the extension and polices of the development plan relating to the protection of vernacular architecture and buildings of historic interest, I consider the scale, height and bulk of the extension to the rear and above the gate house would have a significant negative visual impact not only on the existing dwelling but also and the surrounding area.

Impact on Residential Amenity

7.11. The site is located directly adjoining a four storey apartment building, Stella Maris. To the rear of the existing dwelling, private open space directly associated with an apartment building, bounds the site. The second reason for refusal refers to the location and scale of the extension and the impact on the residential amenity of those residents of Stella Maris. The grounds of appeal consider the development in the context of an urban location acceptable and those occupants of the apartments have no right to overlook or overview the subject site. I have assessed the impact of the proposed development on the occupants of the adjoining separately below.

7.12. Overlooking: The proposed extension bounds the entire length of the western boundary on the ground and first floor. The upper, second and third floors, are set back by c. 1.1m from the edge of the boundary, to facilitate outside circulation space and access to a terrace area at the front, east of the site. The extension is c. 4m to east of the apartments in Stella Maris and adjoining the open space. I note there are no windows along the rear elevation of the extension to overlook into the existing apartments, although I consider the location of the proposed outdoor circulation space directly adjacent to the Stella Maris, may allow for a degree of overlooking onto the adjoining private amenity space and living space of these residents.

7.13. Overshadowing: The subject site is located to the east of the apartments in Stella Maris. The height of proposed two storey extension is c.3.5m, at the highest point, and is located c.5m from the building line of the Stella Maris. The proposed development will cause a significant amount of overshadowing on the private amenity space of those apartments adjoining the site in the morning. I note the location of an existing wall of the Stella Maris building along the south of this private amenity space and should the proposed development be granted this amenity space would be constantly overshadowed.

7.14. Overbearing: As stated above, the two storey extension is positioned in front of a number of apartments. The grounds of appeal note there is currently no right to light or view for those occupants. I have addressed the issue of overshadowing above and I consider the scale of the height of the proposal, directly in front of an apartment development unacceptable, irrelevant of the context of urban or rural. In this regard I consider the proposed development would have an overbearing impact on the occupants of those apartments in Stella Maris.

7.15. Therefore, having regard to the location of the proposed development, directly in front of an apartment building and adjoining private amenity space and the scale and height of the two storey rear extension, I consider the proposal will have a significant negative impact on the residential amenity of these residents in Stella Maris.

Appropriate Assessment

7.16. Having regard to the location, scale and nature of the proposed development it is considered that no appropriate assessment issues arise. The proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1. I recommend that planning permission should be refused for the reasons and considerations as set out below.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the prominent location of the site, to the established built form and character of the dwelling “Coach House” as an important vernacular building in the village of Carlingford which is considered to be of importance to the streetscape, it is considered that the proposed development, consisting of a four-storey rear extension building with a significant intervention to the existing dwelling, would be incongruous in terms of its design, which would be out of character with the existing dwelling and streetscape and would set an undesirable precedent for future development in this area. The proposed development would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area, would be

contrary to the stated policy, SS 30, 34, 35 & HER 58, of the Louth County Council Development Plan 2015-2021 in relation to the contribution and protection of vernacular architecture and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. Having regard to the location of the existing apartment building “Stella Maris” to the rear, west, of the proposed development and the scale of development proposed, it is considered that the proposed extension, by reason of its scale, bulk and proximity to site boundaries, would seriously injure the residential amenities and depreciate the value of adjoining properties by reason of visual obtrusion and overshadowing. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Karen Hamilton
Planning Inspector

16th of March 2020