



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-309205-21

Development	Demolition of 2 semi-detached buildings, construction of replacement veterinary clinic, and widening of vehicular entrance
Location	Village Vets, Main Street, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath
Planning Authority	Meath County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	RA200567
Applicant(s)	Karl Cosgrave
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refusal
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Karl Cosgrave
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	6 th of May 2021
Inspector	Angela Brereton

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is situated on the north side of Main Street/R147 Dunshaughlin. It is c.75m northwest of its junction with the Lagore Road/L5029. It is broadly rectangular in shape, with a stated area of 0.126ha and road frontage of c.35m. The site is occupied by a veterinary surgery which consists of two single -storey hipped roof buildings orientated on a northwest-southeast axis and addressing Main Street with return frontage to the Church access to the east.
- 1.2. The site is located within a Zone of Archaeological Notification (R171677) and Area of Archaeological Interest both associated with the grounds of the St. Seachnall's Church which is itself listed in the Record of Protected Structures (ref. MH044-201). Numerous Recorded and Registered Monuments are located within the grounds of and adjacent to the church.
- 1.3. The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of commercial, residential and community uses including Carberry's public house to the northwest. The church is on a higher level to the north with access to same to the east and addressed by a terrace of two storey dwellings. There is a view of the church spire, from this area of Main Street including from the traffic light-controlled junction of the Lidl on the opposite side of the road.
- 1.4. There is a mix of old and new development that comprises the town centre along the Main Street frontage. A redeveloped site (OSI) is located opposite and southwest of Main Street and includes a coffee shop, dental surgery and pharmacy in a terrace block of varying roof structures with Lidl supermarket beyond. There is parking to the rear of Lidl.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. This proposal is to consist of the following:
 - Demolition of two no. single storey semi-detached buildings;
 - Construction of replacement two storey veterinary clinic;
 - Upgrade/widening of existing westerly vehicular entrance;
 - Associated car parking to rear;

- Reconnection to existing mains services;
- Landscaping and ancillary works.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

On the 15th of December 2020, Meath County Council, refused planning permission for the proposed development for 2no. reasons. In summary these include the following:

1. By virtue of its scale and form, it is considered that the proposed development, if permitted, would adversely affect the setting and approach to St. Seachnall's Church, would be contrary to policies and objectives BH-4 and BH-5 of the Local Area Plan, would be inconsistent with the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan, and contrary to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011).
2. The existing buildings are a fine example of vernacular architecture that contributes positively to the setting and context of the 18th of 19th century streetscape of Dunshaughlin. By virtue of their demolition, it is considered that the proposed development, if permitted, would adversely affect this unique character along Main Street, would be contrary to Policies BH-6, BH-8 and BH-9 of the Local Area Plan, would be inconsistent with the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan, and contrary to the aforementioned Ministerial guidelines and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and hereby establish an undesirable future precedent.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The Planner had regard to the locational context of the site, planning history and context and to the inter-departmental reports. Their Assessment included the following:

- The proposal is seeking to substantially redevelop the site through the demolition of the existing single-storey buildings and to replace with a purpose built two-storey veterinary surgery.
- This proposal is acceptable in principle subject to normal planning consideration, including policies and objectives outlined in the plan.
- Having regard to the Dunshaughlin LAP Policy BH 4 and Policy CH POL 20 and the vernacular character of the building, distinctive character of its setting and in particular the setting of the church (P.S) at the rear, the proposal would impact adversely on areas of visual amenity.
- They have regard to and quote the Conservation Officer's comments which are concerned with the need to protect the character of 18th and 19th century streetscapes.
- They note that the applicant has not submitted a Visual Impact Assessment or an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment to aid further consideration on the matter.
- They note that an Archaeological Assessment has been submitted.
- While they accept that substantial redevelopment has taken place immediately opposite, the streetscape is significantly different and does not form part of the framing view of a P.S.
- They consider that the Lidl building on the opposite side of the road presents a different scenario.
- They have concerns about the proposed height and the proposal being overly dominant in the streetscape.
- They have regard to the Transportation Section comments, and note that they consider it preferable to seek amendments to the layout by way of F.I.
- Similarly having regard to Water Services comments – F.I should be sought.
- They conclude that the proposed development (entire project) by itself or in combination with other plans and developments in the vicinity would not be likely to have a significant effect on European Sites, and that a Stage 2 AA (NIS) is not required.

Further Information request

The Council noted concerns relate to design and layout, access and car parking and site services and concluded that F.I should be requested to include the following to be submitted:

- Proposals should be submitted to include the adaption and reuse of the existing buildings onsite. This redesign should have regard to the setting of the church P.S and be carried out in consultation with the Architectural Conservation Officer in the Council. An Architectural Heritage Assessment should be submitted.
- Full site sections and contiguous elevations are required. An acceptable design solution that takes account of its setting.
- A Visual Impact Assessment and verified photomontages.
- The existing car parking arrangement along the southern side of the development including the haphazard access to same should be removed.
- Measures should be provided to improve visibility of pedestrians by egressing motorists.
- Any proposals to build over or divert existing water or wastewater services should be detailed in a revised layout drawing.
- Revised Public Notices maybe required.

Further Information response

Noel Larkin & Associates Chartered Building Surveyors have submitted an F.I response on behalf of the Applicants to include the following further documentation:

- *A Visual Impact Assessment & Response to F.I Request Report.*
- Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Photomontages
- Revised Site Layout Plan
- Site Section & Contiguous Elevations
- Revised Landscaping Plan (excluding planting to street footpath)

- Irish Water Service Map – details of existing services on site.

Planner's response

They had regard to the F.I submitted and their response includes the following:

- They note that Architectural Conservation Officer's comments relative to the impact of the proposal on the streetscape and on the setting of St. Seachnall's Church P.S and entrance and gateway. They consider the proposal is contrary to planning policies and guidelines and concur with their recommendation to refuse permission.
- The Transportation Department's comments remain outstanding.
- They note the response relative to the Water Services Division/Irish Water.
- They provide a breakdown of development contributions.
- They conclude that the proposed development is inconsistent with the policy context and development management principles and would not therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. They recommend refusal.

3.3. Other Technical Reports

Architectural Conservation Officer

They have regard to the site context adjacent to St. Seachnall's Church P.S., and the Recorded and Registered Monuments of Dunshaughlin. They recommend a condition relative to archaeological monitoring and testing.

They do not agree with the proposals to demolish the two single storey semi-detached buildings from the mid 1800's and provide that the vernacular and character of the 18th and 19th century streetscape needs to be protected. They consider a reuse to retain the buildings in-situ would be preferable to the new build. They consider that the Council's F.I request has not been addressed and recommend refusal of permission.

Transportation Section

They had no objections subject to details being submitted regarding the access and parking.

Water Services

While they have no objections, they recommended the following:

- The applicant to apply permeable paving to all proposed private car parking spaces.
- All work to comply fully with the GDSDS Regional Drainage Policies Volume 2, for New Developments.

3.4. Prescribed Bodies

The Planner's Report provides that the application was referred to the following external consultants under article 28 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001(as amended) An Taisce, DAU (Architectural Heritage) and to date there has been no response.

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, the Gaeltacht, Sports & Media

The DAU (Archaeology) noted the proposed development is within a zone of archaeological potential established around the town of Dunshauglin (RM.ME044-33). They recommend that conditions relative to archaeological monitoring be included.

Irish Water

They have no objections subject to conditions.

3.5. Third Party Observations

None noted on file.

4.0 Planning History

The Planner's Report provides that there is no Planning History relevant to the subject site.

Adjacent Lands

- RA/190402 – Lidl Ireland GmbH – Permission granted subject to considerations for the retention of a dividing wall and sub-division of units 2

(vacant) and 3(existing coffee shop) leading to changes in the GFA of the units. Also, permission granted for a change of use of unit 2 from retail to dental surgery.

- RA/170866 – Lidl Ireland GmbH – Permission granted subject to conditions for the Lidl Store to include retail units, offices and café/restaurant and all ancillary and associated works.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National and Regional Guidelines

Relevant national and strategic policy documents, relevant to this appeal include:

- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (2018)
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2019
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011

5.2. Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

It is noted that an extensive list of planning policies and objectives relative to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and the Dunshaughlin Local Area Plan 2009-2015 (as extended) are given in the Planner's Report and in the documentation submitted. These include the following:

Settlement Hierarchy

Dunshaughlin is described as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town in the Meath County Council Settlement Hierarchy. Figure 3.3 shows it is located within the Hinterland Area of Meath.

Dunshaughlin is Level 3 in the Retail Hierarchy for Co. Meath in the Core Strategy.

Section 2.3.3 notes that Local Area Plans remain in place for a number of towns, including Dunshaughlin. It provides that future reviews of these LAPs will be required

to be compliant with the DP as varied. It notes that these plans are to be read as part of the CDP pursuant to Section 11(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Section 3.4.4 notes that Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns including Dunshaughlin need to provide a full range of services adequate to meet local needs, both within the town and in the surrounding rural catchment area, but not generate long distance travel patterns.

Policy SS OBJ 11 – To ensure that Moderate Sustainable Growth Towns develop in a self-sufficient manner with population growth in tandem with physical and social infrastructure and economic development. Development should support a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport.

Archaeological Heritage

Policy CH POL 7 - To ensure that development in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument is sensitively sited and designed so that it does not significantly detract from the monument. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required.

Policy CH POL 8 - To retain surviving medieval plots and street patterns in the villages and towns of Meath, where practicable, and in the course of development to record evidence of ancient boundaries, layouts, etc.

Policies CH POL 9 – CH POL 11 also relate to archaeological monitoring etc.

Architectural Heritage – Record of Protected Structures

Section 9.6.10 refers to the Protected Structures and notes the inclusion of land and structures lying in their curtilage. This includes that: *Developments in proximity to Protected Structures, which would seriously detract from their character, will not normally be permitted. Also, In the interest of sustainability, it is considered that the re-use and adaption of existing buildings is preferable to their demolition.*

Relevant Policies include:

CH POL 10 – To conserve and protect the architectural heritage of Meath.

CH POL 11 - To require that all planning applications relating to Protected Structures contain the appropriate accompanying documentation in accordance with the

Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) or any variation thereof, to enable the proper assessment of the proposed works.

CH POL 15 – To encourage, where appropriate, the adaptive re-use of existing buildings and sites in a manner compatible with their character and significance.

Appendix 8 contains the Record of Protected Structures and this includes:

MH044-201 St. Sechnall's Church of Ireland.

Vernacular Heritage

Section 9.4.14 refers to Vernacular Heritage which is the expression of the culture of a community. This includes that alterations to individual buildings can have a significant and cumulative effect on Streetscape, and landscapes.

CH POL 20 - a) To encourage the retention, sympathetic maintenance, and appropriate re-use of the vernacular heritage of Meath, in both the towns and rural areas of the County, including the retention of the original fabric, such as windows, renders, shop fronts, gates, yards, boundary walls and other significant features where possible;

b) To discourage the replacement of good quality vernacular buildings or features with modern structures or features;

c) To ensure that new build adjoining, and extensions to, vernacular buildings are of an appropriate design and do not detract from the building's character or that of its setting.

Section 9.6.15 includes that contemporary buildings of a high design standard will be actively encouraged through the planning system.

Other Development

Section 11.7 refers to Retail Development and notes that the provision of new retail development in Meath will be in accordance with the County Retail Strategy and will contribute to achieving the aims of the core strategy and economic strategy. This includes: *Infill development should reflect the architectural character of its surrounds in terms of height, massing, materials and design.*

Section 11.8 refers to Other Commercial Development. This includes that more favourable consideration will be given to development in their appropriate zones having regard to the zoning objectives.

Section 11.9 refers to Car Parking Standards. This includes that in the case of any specific uses not listed in this table, the Council will specify its requirements in relation to parking. A veterinary practice is not listed.

Chapter 7 refers to Water, Drainage and Environmental Services.

WS POL 31 refers to Surface Water Management.

5.3. **Dunshaughlin Local Area Plan 2009-2015 (as extended)**

Zoning

The Land Use Zoning Map shows the site within the B1 zoning where the objective seeks: *To protect and enhance the special and social character of existing town and village centres and to provide for new and improved town centre facilities and uses.*

The land to the rear which contains the church is zoned G1 – *To provide for necessary community, recreational and educational facilities.*

This church site includes: *Trees to be Preserved.* The site is also within an Area of Archaeological Interest that encompasses the centre of Dunshaughlin.

Built and Cultural Heritage

Section 7.2.2 refers to The Street Pattern of Dunshaughlin Village Centre. This includes: *Dunshaughlin is distinctive as the street curves around to accommodate the site of Saint Sechnall or Saint Secundinus' Church at the north of the Main Street. This street pattern is not unique to Dunshaughlin, as it is also seen in Trim, Kells, Kilkenny, and other towns built around early religious sites.*

Section 7.2.3 refers to The Heritage Buildings of Dunshaughlin.

LAP Objectives BH-1 TO BH-11 refer. As below some of these Objectives are referred to in the Council's Reasons for Refusal.

BH-4: To have regard to the visual amenity provided by views of the spire of Saint Seanchall's Church in the consideration of any new development proposals, and to discourage developments which would block existing views.

BH-5: To ensure the continuing protection of the structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures, including their curtilages and boundary treatments. As the continued use of protected structures is one of the most efficient ways to safeguard their future, proposals for changes of use to protected structures will be considered on their merits.

BH-6: To encourage the retention of original or early windows, doors, renders, roof slates and ridge crestings, chimneys, and other significant features to the front elevation of historic buildings on Main Street.

BH-8: To preserve and enhance the character of the Main Street of Dunshaughlin by encouraging fenestration appropriate to each building, to the front elevations of buildings on Main Street.

BH-9: To enhance the character of the Main Street by requiring that any proposed development fronting onto it complements the existing character and contributes to Dunshaughlin's sense of place by its height, scale, and design. All proposed developments should be of architectural merit appropriate to the public face of Dunshaughlin.

BH -10: Proposals for developments of a quality contemporary design, rather than pastiche designs will be encouraged in Dunshaughlin.

5.4. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is within 15km of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA and the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC which are part of the Natura Network.

5.5. EIA Screening

Having regard to the nature of the proposed development and taking into account the existing commercial development on this site, the serviced nature of the site, and the distance of the site from nearby sensitive receptors, 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

RW Nowlan & Associates Chartered Planning & Property Advisors have submitted a First Party Appeal on behalf of the Applicants. They have regard to the locational context, planning history and policy and their grounds of appeal include the following:

- They note significant recent updating and improvements made on Main Street, including Lidl and Aldi. The application proposed the demolition of the existing two single storey structures is to be replaced with a state of the art vet clinic which would serve to further enhance the level of service provision in the town.
- The existing buildings are not fit for purpose in terms of energy efficiency, adequate space provision and the level of service.
- The sympathetic design proposed will have a positive impact on Main Street and will protect views to St. Seachnall's Church.
- The modern interpretation of vernacular style design is the most appropriate design approach for the site, whilst also delivering a modern, functional veterinary clinic.
- They note that the singular objection to the development proposal was contained in the Conservation Officer's Report to the Council. Meath Co. Co's refusal was reliant on this in their reasons for refusal.
- Their response focuses on the specific objectives of the Dunshaughlin LAP as they are considered appropriate when considering the context of the proposed development site.
- They include figures showing views of the buildings proposed for demolition and the church. They conclude that the proposed development will not negatively impact views of the PS of the Church and as such, they consider the quoted policy for refusal of the proposed development is inappropriate.
- The proposed development has no impact on the lands of the PS nor the boundary treatment of same.

- The proposed development does not include the dividing wall between their client's property and the P.S lands as the retention of this feature is deemed significant.
- They refer to the Archaeological Assessment submitted and agree to carry out any monitoring works deemed necessary.
- The proposed development has been designed sympathetically so as to ensure the safeguarding of the P.S and the surrounding features.
- They refer to the Architectural Heritage Assessment carried out. They provide that the curtilage and boundary of the P.S Church will not be negatively impacted.
- The existing cottages proposed for demolition have been significantly altered over the years and are only of modest historic significance.
- Additionally, the internal layout of the existing buildings are poor representations of 19th Century structures. They consider that there is little remaining internal structure left to protect. Similarly with fenestration.
- Dunshaughlin Main Street is considered an evolving historic core with significant new development in recent years.
- The proposed development utilises features found in surrounding buildings which results in a design that compliments both the site setting and the visual amenity of Main Street.
- The proposed development would be a significant improvement to Main Street through the removal of a poor example of 19th Century architecture.
- It proposes to further consolidate Main Street which is going through a period of regeneration, aligned with the service requirements to support the local population density. The proposal will add to high quality service provision in the local area.
- The proposed development positively contributes to the area and is appropriate for this site. It would not have a material impact on Main Street. To refuse permission would be inappropriate to the proposed development which encompasses the highest level of design quality and protection of local

cultural heritage. They ask the Board to overturn the decision of the Council and to grant permission.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

They have regard to the applicant and background issues. They acknowledge the *de novo* scope of the appeal. They have reviewed the issues raised by the First Party as outlined in their appeal submission and provide they are satisfied that these issues have been substantially addressed in their Planning Reports.

The main concerns relate to the impact of the proposed development on the P.S. St Seachnall's Church by virtue of its scale and form. The loss of the existing vernacular buildings would impact adversely on the streetscape and be contrary to planning policy. They have some concerns regarding the level of accuracy of the Visual Impact Assessment.

They remain of the opinion that the proposed development should be refused as per the reasons they have set out in Appendix A. They do not wish to forward a contingency submission in this instance given that the principle of development is not deemed acceptable.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. Principle and Policy Considerations

- 7.1.1. Dunshaughlin is described in the Settlement Hierarchy for County Meath as being a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town and as such seeks to provide a full range of services adequate to meet local needs, both within the town and in the surrounding rural catchment area, but not generate long distance travel patterns. As noted in the Dunshaughlin LAP the site is located within the B1 Town Centre Zoning, where the Objective seeks: *To protect, provide for and/or improve town and village centre facilities and uses.* It is provided that a Veterinary Surgery is among the permitted uses. Therefore, the principle of development is acceptable.
- 7.1.2. It is noted that this proposal is not for a change of use on the subject site, rather it is to retain the existing use as a Veterinary Practice, but to demolish the existing mid-19th century buildings which the applicants submit provide poor and inadequate

accommodation, and to build a replacement up to date Veterinary Practice to be more contemporary and fit for purpose. It will also provide for designated parking at the rear.

- 7.1.3. The issue in this case is whether it is considered acceptable to demolish these buildings of some vernacular character which form part of the original built heritage of Dunshaughlin, and replace them, with a new modern construction. It is noted that they have frontage to Main Street and while not listed nor within an Architectural Conservation Area, are proximate to the setting of the Protected Structure of Saint Seachnall's Church, which is an important historic building/site in Dunshaughlin. Note is also had of the views to the church and to the site's location within an Area of Archaeological Interest.
- 7.1.4. Regard is had to the documentation submitted including the First Party grounds of appeal, the Conservation Officer's Comments and to the Council's Reasons for refusal in this Assessment below. The policies and objectives referred to in these reasons for refusal are taken into consideration and have been included in the Policy Section of this Report.

7.2. Rationale and Usage

- 7.2.1. The Planning Report submitted with the application provides a rationale for the proposed development. This notes that the Veterinary clinic use which is permitted in principle in the land use zoning, has been in operation for many years and is a well-established, very much in demand family practice in the centre of Dunshaughlin. This application is seeking to develop the site in order to deliver a purpose-built facility that will efficiently serve both the treatment of animals and the attending customers.
- 7.2.2. It is provided that the existing premises is not thermally efficient and is aesthetically dated when compared with modern development directly across on Main Street. Details are given of the operation of the veterinary practice. The new modern veterinary care facilities are to enhance this much needed service and to benefit the community, as a whole, where there is now a large companion pet population.
- 7.2.3. Details are given of the practice and this includes opening hours i.e. 9am – 7pm Monday- Friday, 9am - 6pm Saturday; 10am – 6pm Sunday. It is provided that all animals are presented at intervals by appointment only to ensure that there is no

large congregation of animals or people at any one time. Details are also given of noise control measures. Also, of waste and hygiene control and waste management service providers.

7.3. Existing Buildings

- 7.3.1. In response to the Council's Further Information request an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted. This notes that the structure to be demolished consists of two adjoining single storey semi-detached four bay houses with hipped fibre cement roofs, which were originally mirror images of each other. It is noted that all windows and doors are replacements. Both buildings have been extended rear wards at different times in a north easterly direction. The window opes on the right hand cottage have been enlarged, whilst the left cottage appears to retain the original opes. Internally there are virtually no original features. The original building would probably be random rubble but no masonry is visible, the chimneys are brick with ceramic liners.
- 7.3.2. The Assessment has regard to early OS mapping and provides that the existing buildings were built between 1836 and 1884 as labourers cottages. They provide that there is no evidence or report of any particular historical event that has been associated with these cottages. The Assessment concludes that the actual heritage of the standing value of these buildings remains low.
- 7.3.3. This is disputed by the Council's Conservation Officer, who is concerned that the demolition of these vernacular cottages, which form an attractive feature, and the construction of the new build will have an adverse impact on the heritage and streetscape of Dunshaughlin, which would be contrary to planning policies and guidelines. Also, that the proposed new build will have an adverse impact on views the church P.S to the rear of the site.
- 7.3.4. It is noted that the Council's F.I request advised that the applicant submit revised proposals to include the adaption and re-use of the existing buildings on site, to be carried out in consultation with their Architectural Conservation Officer and to be cognisant of the setting of the Church P.S, the views of which are framed by the existing buildings.

7.3.5. The F.I response made on behalf of the applicants provide that the proposed design has opted to remain within the existing footprint, so that the new building would ease into the established streetscape, thereby maintaining the existing pattern. They consider that building at the rear of the existing buildings would increase, the footprint, scale and mass of the building, thereby potentially interrupting the view of the Church to the rear. They consider the new design, which is to remain in the existing footprint, the most feasible approach in maintaining the view of St Seachnall's and in providing much needed enhancement of functionality in a modern building for Village Vets.

7.4. Design and Layout – New Build

- 7.4.1. It is noted that there is a steep incline to the topography of the site to the rear and it is proposed that the new development be in a similar footprint to the existing and be of a height and form that will be positioned without significantly altering this topography. It is provided that the first floor portion over the splayed ground floor area, has been recessed from the remaining upper floor looking over the street in order to maintain views to the rear further.
- 7.4.2. The application form provides that the g.f.a of the existing single storey building to be demolished is 167.4sqm and of the new two storey replacement building is 385sq.m. all on this site of 0.126ha. The floor plans show the ground and first floors to be used for the purpose built Veterinary clinic. The proposed building is shown 8.5m to ridge height.
- 7.4.3. It is noted that the existing building is c. 5.2m to ridge height, so is considerably lower than that proposed. If the Board decides to permit, I would recommend, that it be conditioned that the First Floor Office side projecting element not be included. This would omit c.30sq.m of floor space but would mean this side element would be single storey and would better assist in retaining views of the Church spire from Main Street.
- 7.4.4. External finishes are to include smooth render and blue/black slates. The roadside shopfront is to be glazed timber. I would consider it important that quality external finishes be used and if the Board decides to permit, I would recommend, that a condition relative to external finishes be included.

7.5. Impact on the Protected Structure

- 7.5.1. The Planning Report submitted outlines the need for new urban design to respect the character, scale and form of its counterparts and the landscape. In designing the new building, they provide that the critical aspects for consideration have been Saint Seachnall's Church, the existing street pattern and the style of recent development. They have submitted contiguous elevations to indicate the elevated nature of the church to the rear of the subject site, and its relationship with the proposed new building.
- 7.5.2. It is of note that Appendix 8 of the Meath CDP contains the Record of Protected Structures and this includes: MH044-201 St. Sechnall's Church of Ireland – *Detached Board of First Fruits church, built 1814 with three-stage tower to the east Graveyard and remains of medieval church to the site. Pair of squared limestone gate piers and wrought-iron gates. (NIAH Reg. No. 14335004).*
- 7.5.3. Chapter 13 of the 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011' has regard to the curtilage and attendant grounds of a Protected Structure. Section 13.8 refers to *Other Developments affecting the Setting of a PS or an ACA*. This includes reference to dealing with development outside of the curtilage of a PS or an ACA which has the potential to impact upon their character and provides that similar consideration should be given as for proposed development within the attendant grounds.
- 7.5.4. One of the main impacts will be relative to the view of the spire from this area of Main Street, and in particular from the new Lidl junction on the opposite side of the road. This portion of Main Street has a distinct curve. It is considered that the newer two storey building will have an impact in restricting this view. In this respect it is noted that Section 7.2.2 of the Dunshaughlin LAP refers to the distinctive street pattern as being worth preserving for two reasons; *both for its intrinsic streetscape value, as it closes the vista to the north of Main Street, and for its cultural heritage, as a physical reminder of the manner in which emerging streets deferred to early ecclesiastical enclosures.*
- 7.5.5. It is submitted that the completed new contemporary building will complement a harmonious streetscape, particularly in terms of the curve on the road and the building line of Carberry Bar to the west. However, on site I noted that the existing

single storey pitched roofed building which currently comprise the veterinary practice, visually, provides a vernacular architectural form, along with Carberry Bar to the west. They also contribute to the setting of the Church and to the entrance to the Avenue to the Church and form part of the older street pattern of Dunshaughlin.

7.6. Impact on the Character and Amenities of the Area

- 7.6.1. Dunshaughlin, is a mixture of the old and the new and regard is had to the regeneration of the town. This is also relative to the increase in population and residential development, which has/is occurring in recent years. Recent development in this particular area of the town has included the redevelopment of lands immediately across from the subject site to accommodate Lidl, numerous commercial units, such as a chemist, dentists and a Costa coffee shop, together with a large parking area associated with the Lidl. It is submitted that this has had a significant impact on the streetscape of Dunshaughlin, effectively creating a break in the old street pattern. These are now facing Main Street, on the opposite side of the road to the subject site and includes an open public realm type space and opens out the subject site environs. In addition, the redevelopment of the 'Madden site'/lands to the rear of the Bank of Ireland which include an Aldi, have further altered the streetscape. It is also noted that a new housing scheme called 'The Rectory' has recently been completed to the east of the Church lane which bounds the subject site. Therefore, there has been a considerable emphasis on new build in the town.
- 7.6.2. However, these form an attractive pair of vernacular cottages in this area of Main Street. I would consider that their re-use would be preferable to their demolition. It is noted that while they adjoin the curtilage of the St. Seachnall's Church P.S they are not in themselves, protected. It could be that the existing rear extensions, which are not part of the original structures, could be removed and a well-designed single storey rear purpose built extension could be built at the rear to add accommodation to the Veterinary Clinic. Otherwise, the re-use of the buildings should be considered.
- 7.6.3. However, I would be concerned that their demolition, would set an undesirable precedent for other such historic vernacular cottages, dotted along the Main Street of Dunshaughlin. Also, it is noted that they appear in a better state of repair than some

of these cottages. Therefore, I would not recommend the removal of these heritage buildings which add to the character and streetscape of Dunshaughin Main Street.

7.7. Archaeology

- 7.7.1. In view of the location of the subject site, within an area of archaeological interest an Archaeological Assessment has been submitted with the application. The Report has established that the subject site is within a zone of notification associated with the medieval settlement of Dunshaughlin, MEO44-033 and is adjacent to other recorded monuments (details are given) in this location including to the Ecclesiastical Enclosures MEO44033009 (c.100m to the south). Details are given of previous excavations and relative to other developments in the area. Regard is also had to cartographic review and aerial photography and to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) and Protected Structures.
- 7.7.2. It is provided that the field survey revealed that the rear of the property slopes upwards to where the Early Medieval ecclesiastical enclosure of Dunshaughlin is encountered. It is noted that this enclosure also forms the rear boundary of the property, and that given its status as a recorded monument it should not be altered or impacted as part of any development of the site. In addition, that the ground rising towards this boundary should be seen as having considerable archaeological potential, as it may have been contained within the churchyard in the past. In this respect the wall and split gardens between the rear gardens of the two properties that form the subject site are noted. They submit that it is not proposed to interfere with the rear portion of the subject site in any way, in order to preserve any potential archaeological artefacts or inhumations and very importantly, the view of the church, from the rear of the site or the spire from the street.
- 7.7.3. Regard is had to the comments of the Department - DAU Section (Archaeology). Due to the archaeological significance of the area, it is recommended that archaeological testing and monitoring be carried out. If the Board decides to permit it is recommended that an appropriate condition be included.

7.8. Access and Parking

- 7.8.1. The current arrangement is the existing side entrance to the reception area and car parking along the side of the east side of the existing building. Also, cars park along the adjoining small area of road frontage to the houses on the opposite side of the road. This detracts from the Avenue to the church P.S. There is a small element of parking at the rear, of the existing buildings with access to Main Street to the north west of the building. While not marked out in view of accessibility issues this appears to be more in use as a staff parking area. There is a green area to the rear of this which is also within the site and there are views of the church on the more elevated lands to the rear of the site.
- 7.8.2. The traffic light-controlled junction with Lidl is on the opposite side of the Main Street/R147. There is a large parking area to the rear of the Lidl store and associated retail/commercial. It is noted that the reconfiguration of this junction opposite the site, and traffic in this area, presents some difficulties for access to the veterinary practice.
- 7.8.3. The current application proposes to designate the existing westerly entrance to the site as being the main vehicular entrance, avoiding the two-lane turning junction. It is provided that this proposal will allow for a safer ingress/egress of patron's vehicles. As shown on the Site Layout Plan off-street parking will be provided at the rear. They also provide that provision is made of the attendance of goods and services to the rear of the proposed building with adequate manoeuvring, turn bay and standing zones. It is submitted that this will provide a considerable improvement on the current situation, where there is no designated parking area marked out.
- 7.8.4. It is noted that the Transportation Section has no objection subject to the existing car parking arrangement along the southern side of the development, including the haphazard access to same, being removed. Also, that the applicant ensures that a 3m wide clear and unobstructed footpath is provided along the roadside boundary of the site. In addition, that the applicant be requested to agree measures to improve visibility of pedestrians by egressing motorists. They note that a road opening licence is required to agree and complete the proposed works.
- 7.8.5. It is recommended that if the Board decides to permit that appropriate conditions relative to access and parking be included.

7.9. Drainage

- 7.9.1. It is submitted that this is already a serviced site, all services such as water supply and foul sewer are already in place. It is not considered that this proposal will cause an intensification of the already existent use. As such it is provided, that it is not anticipated that there will be any additional loading applied to mains services.

7.10. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

- 7.10.1. The proposed development comprises the replacement of an existing commercial building within a serviced development. Consequently, it is not considered that appropriate assessment issues arise or that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans and projects on any European site.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1. I recommend that the proposed development be refused for the reasons and considerations below.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. This proposal for the demolition of the existing single storey semi-detached pair of 19th century vernacular cottages, with frontage onto Main Street, Dunshaughlin and adjoining the curtilage of St. Seachnall's Church, a Protected Structure (ref.MH044-201), and their replacement with a contemporary purpose built two storey veterinary clinic would result in the loss of the existing buildings, would detract from the character of the area and would impact on views to the church spire. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies CH POL 10 and CH POL 20 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and to policies BH-4, BH-5 and BH-9 of the Dunshaughlin Local Area Plan 2009-2015 (as extended). As the curtilage of the site, adjoins a Protected Structure and the proposal would impact on its setting, it would also be contrary to Section 13.8 of the 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011', which are Ministerial

Guidelines. As such the proposal would set an undesirable precedent and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Angela Brereton
Planning Inspector

12th of May 2021