



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP- 313588-22

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<b>Development</b>	Retention permission for existing dormer log cabin & wastewater treatment unit. Permission for upgrade of existing wastewater treatment unit and construction of outdoor recreational area.
<b>Location</b>	Drumsawry or Summerbank, Oldcastle, Co. Meath.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Meath County Council.
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	22/287.
<b>Applicant</b>	Niall Shortt.
<b>Type of Application</b>	Retention Permission & Permission.
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Refusal of Retention Permission & Permission.
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	First Party v Refusal of Retention Permission & Permission.
<b>Appellant</b>	Niall Shortt.

**Observer(s)**

None

**Date of Site Inspection**

21<sup>st</sup> January 2022

**Inspector**

Enda Duignan

## **1.0 Site Location and Description**

**1.1.** The address of the appeal site is Drumsawry or Summerbank, Oldcastle, Co. Meath and is located c. 3.5km to the south-east of the settlement of Oldcastle. The site is located along the south-western side a local tertiary road (L28007), which connects to the L2800 further to the southeast. The irregular shaped site has a stated area of c. 2.37ha. and has total a road frontage of c. 350m. A significant portion of the existing landholding comprises tourism related accommodation and would appear to cumulatively trade as 'Loughcrew Megalithic Centre'. The overall site comprises:

- A grassed area which is utilised for camping and includes floodlighting at the eastern end of the site.
- A single storey cottage and group of thatched structures which are in use as a museum, visitor centre, coffee shop, meeting rooms, toilet facilities, reception/office, games room, cooking and dining areas.
- A hardstanding area with caravan and campervan parking bays and associated floodlighting.
- A grassed and hardstanding area which includes a total of 6 no. 'yurt' type structures, a toilet block and storage shed.
- A 1.5 storey log cabin located at the western end of the site for which retention permission is now being sought.

**1.2.** There are a number of existing vehicular entrances along the roadside boundary which serve the appeal site and the larger landholding. Given the topography of the appeal site, the structures within the landholding are elevated relative to the roadside boundary.

**1.3.** The surrounding area is characterised by undulating agricultural lands. Rural dwellings are interspersed along the surrounding road network and there are other tourism related uses within the wider area. The surrounds of the site have a rich archaeological heritage and the site is located within the Zone of Archaeological Notification for 2 no. national monuments. There are also a large number of other national monuments within the surrounds of the Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills. The Loughcrew Cairns are located to the south-west, south and east of the appeal site on an east-to-

west axis and comprise a total of c. 30 no. passage tombs which are centred on moderately flat-topped summits. There is also a Protected View (View 6) c. 1km to the east of the appeal site at the summit of Slieve na Calliagh.

## **2.0 Proposed Development**

**2.1.** The proposal seeks retention permission for the construction of an existing 1.5 storey log cabin structure for use as tourism related accommodation which is described as being ancillary to the adjoining campsite. The log cabin comprises a kitchen, living/dining room, storage and bathroom at ground floor level with a bathroom and 3 no. bedrooms at first floor level. There is a first floor balcony on the rear elevation serving 2 no. bedrooms. The cabin is set back c. 70m from the existing road side boundary and is currently accessed via a gravel driveway. The cabin has a 'A' framed, pitched roof form and is of timber construction with a maximum stated height of c. 8.9m. Retention permission is also sought for the existing waste water treatment system (wwts) and associated site works.

**2.2.** The proposed development also seeks permission for various works on the appeal site which can be summarised as follows:

- Upgrading the existing waste water treatment system and percolation area to serve the log cabin.
- Removal of the existing vehicular entrance and hardcore surface driveway leading to the log cabin from the public road.
- The provision of a new gravelled access leading from the area of the site containing the existing yurts to the log cabin.
- The construction of an outdoor recreational and arts room with covered patio area which is ancillary to the log cabin and located on its northern side.
- The construction of a rental bike storage shed which is located adjacent to the existing on site meeting room (adjacent to existing thatched structures within the eastern portion of the site).
- The construction of a covered outdoor wellness, sauna and hot tub area to the south of the existing log cabin.
- The construction of a barbeque hut adjacent to the existing yurts.

- All ancillary site works with landscaping.

### **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

#### **3.1. Decision**

Meath County Council refused permission for the proposed development and the development to be retained for the following 3 no. reasons:

1. It is a policy (HER POL 52 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, *“To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design”* and objective (HER OBJ 56) of the Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, *“To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape”* and objective (HER OBJ 49), *“To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations”*.

The site is located within the ‘Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Character Area’ (No. 19) which is of Exceptional Value and of High Sensitivity and of National and International Importance.

The site is within 600 meters of Slieve na Calliagh Protected View and Prospect which is of National Importance and described as a *“panoramic view in all directions including intervisibility between the three peaks. Site of high cultural and scenic significance characterised by absent or very low levels of enclosure”*.

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (a covered outdoor wellness, sauna and hot tub area; an outdoor

recreational and arts room with covered patio area) if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from its *natural interest and beauty*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would interfere with the character of the landscape and a view or prospect of special amenity value which is necessary to preserve and would contravene the aforementioned policy objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is a policy (HER POL 54) of the Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, “*To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting and amenity of the Tara landscape and Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills*”.

The site is located within the ‘Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Conservation Area’ as set out in section 9.11 of the County Development Plan.

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (a covered outdoor wellness, sauna and hot tub area; an outdoor recreational and arts room with covered patio area) if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting it from its *archaeological heritage and rural character*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would adversely affect this landscape conservation area and would contravene the aforementioned policy objectives of the County Development Plan, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. In accordance with section 35 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2021, the planning authority considers that there is a real and substantial risk that this element of the development in respect of which permission is sought would not be completed or retained in accordance with any permission or any condition to which such a permission would be subject.

### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

#### **3.2.1. Planning Report**

The Meath County Council Planning Report forms the basis for the decision. In terms of the assessment of the application, the report refers to the planning history of the site and the commentary of the Conservation Officer with respect to a previous application on the appeal site, where concerns were expressed with respect to the development of the appeal site. The Planning Report indicates that the proposal was considered to be at variance with the rural vernacular traditions of the area and would be totally out of character with this very sensitive rural landscape. It is stated that to grant retention permission would set a very undesirable precedent for other similar types of development. It was also considered that the proposed development would further erode the rural character and visual amenities of the area in question, resulting in an unduly prominent and visually intrusive physical feature and would dominate, rather than integrate with, the wider surrounding landscape, incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings. The Planning Report recommended a refusal of permission for the development proposal for 3 no. reasons.

#### **3.2.2. Other Technical Reports**

Roads: Report received stating no objection subject to compliance with conditions.

#### **3.2.3. Prescribed Bodies**

None.

#### **3.2.4. Third Party Observations**

None.

## 4.0 Planning History

**21/1675:** Planning permission refused by the Planning Authority in October 2021 for the development consisting of the following:

Retention Permission for:

- Existing dormer style log cabin operating as tourism accommodation ancillary to adjoining campsite,
- Existing waste water treatment system,
- Ancillary site works.

Permission for:

- To close up existing entrance and remove hardcore surfaced driveway serving the dormer style log cabin,
- To use the existing entrance to the yurts area of the site along with internal gravelled roadway to access the log cabin building,
- To carry out alterations to the existing log cabin to include the following:
  - o Remove front entrance lobby and storage area including cutting back of roof area over,
  - o Removal of balcony area on gable end,
  - o Cutting back and removal of large roof overhangs and log ends and the construction of an external block and rendered wall around the exterior of the cabin including alterations to window and door opens to the cabin,
  - o Upgrading of existing waste water treatment system and percolation area serving the existing log cabin and glamping yurts/camping area,
  - o All ancillary site works to include extensive landscaping to the north west of the site

The application was refused for the following 3 no. reasons:

1. Objective(s) of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (as varied) (the CDP) include *“to seek to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of all landscape character types, and to maintain the visual integrity of areas of*



*exceptional value and high sensitivity” (LC OBJ 1) and “To preserve the views and prospects and the amenity of places and features of natural beauty or interest listed in Appendix 12 and shown on Map 9.5.1 from development that would interfere with the character and visual amenity of the landscape” (LCOBJ5). The site is located in Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Character Area’ which is of exceptional landscape value, high landscape sensitivity and national international landscape importance. The site is within 600 meters Slieve na Calliagh Protected View and Prospect which is of National Importance and described as a “Panoramic view in all directions including intervisibility between the three peaks. Site of high cultural and scenic significance characterised by absent or very low levels of enclosure”.*

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (vehicular link), if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from its *natural interest and beauty*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would interfere with the character of the landscape and a view or prospect of special amenity value which is necessary to preserve and would contravene the aforementioned objectives of the of the County Development Plan, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is the policy of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (as varied), “*To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting an amenity of the Tara landscape Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills*”. The site is located within the ‘Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Conservation Area’ as set out in section 9.11 of the County Development Plan.

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (vehicular link, wastewater treatment system and percolation area and upgrades thereto) if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from its *archaeological heritage and rural character*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would adversely affect this landscape conservation area and would contravene the aforementioned policy objectives of the County Development Plan, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. In accordance with section 35 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2021, the planning authority considers that there is a real and substantial risk that this element of the development in respect of which permission is sought would not be completed or retained in accordance with any permission or any condition to which such a permission would be subject.

**21/1085:** Planning permission granted by the Planning Authority in July 2021 for the retention of existing toilet and washroom facilities in for the existing campsite use, and planning permission for new effluent treatment system and percolation area to serve the existing toilet and washroom facilities and a change of use of lands to south of existing campsite from agriculture to campsite use.

I note that Condition No. 2(b) is of relevance and was included as follows:

- This permission shall be for a limited period only, and shall cease on or before the expiration of 5 years from the date of the final grant of permission after which all structures, hard standing and signage shall be removed and the site, including washroom/toilet facilities, restored to its previous condition, unless authorised by a separate grant of permission.

Reason: in the interests of clarity and to limit the duration of the permission having regard to the temporary nature of the development proposed in order to assess the longer-term impacts on the character and amenities of the area.

**KA/200995:** A split decision issued by the Planning Authority in June 2021 for the development consisting of the following:

Planning permission granted for:

- Retention of existing campsite area gravel pathways and external lighting and associated services.
- Retention of 6 no. glamping yurts and ancillary stands forming part of existing camp site.
- Retention of toilets block used as part of yurt/camping area.
- Closure of existing entrance to field.
- Signage.
- all ancillary site works.

Planning permission refused for:

- Retention of existing dormer style log cabin operating as tourism accommodation ancillary to adjoining campsite and associated vehicular entrance and existing treatment system
- Upgrading of existing treatment system and percolation area serving the existing log cabin and glamping yurts/camping area.

The application was refused for the following 3 no. reasons:

1. Objective(s) of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (as varied) (the CDP) include *“to seek to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of all landscape character types, and to maintain the visual integrity of areas of exceptional value and high sensitivity”* (LC OBJ 1) and *“To preserve the views and prospects and the amenity of places and features of natural beauty or interest listed in Appendix 12 and shown on Map 9.5.1 from development that would interfere with the character and visual amenity of the landscape”* (LCOBJ5). The site is

located in Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Character Area' which is of exceptional landscape value, high landscape sensitivity and national international landscape importance. The site is within 600 meters Slieve na Calliagh Protected View and Prospect which is of National Importance and described as a "*Panoramic view in all directions including intervisibility between the three peaks. Site of high cultural and scenic significance characterised by absent or very low levels of enclosure*".

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (vehicular link), if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from its *natural interest and beauty*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would interfere with the character of the landscape and a view or prospect of special amenity value which is necessary to preserve and would contravene the aforementioned objectives of the County, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is the policy of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (as varied), "*To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting an amenity of the Tara landscape Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills*". The site is located within the 'Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Conservation Area' as set out in section 9.11 of the County Development Plan.

By virtue of its siting and design and its elevated position along the public road removed from the main tourism complex, the existing log cabin and associated works (vehicular link, wastewater treatment system and percolation area and upgrades thereto) if permitted, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive

feature detracting from its *archaeological heritage and rural character*. It would be incapable of being satisfactorily assimilated into its surroundings and would injure the visual amenities and integrity of the area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would adversely affect this landscape conservation area and would contravene the aforementioned policy objectives of the County Development Plan, establish an undesirable future precedent and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. In accordance with section 35 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2021, the planning authority considers that there is a real and substantial risk that this element of the development in respect of which permission is sought would not be completed or retained in accordance with any permission or any condition to which such a permission would be subject.

**KA/160145:** Planning permission granted by the Planning Authority in September 2016 for development consisting of:

The retention of:

- Amendments and alterations made to existing single storey cottage building A during refurbishment works from that previously granted under KA/121032.
- Relocated single storey restaurant building B incorporating sit down areas, storage and food preparation areas.
- Single storey meeting room building C.
- Single storey sanitary facilities building D.
- Single storey food store building E.
- Single storey storage building F.
- General purpose campsite single storey building G.
- Single storey sanitary facilities building H.
- External children's playground area.
- Hardcore caravan/tent/campervan parking and berth area.
- Building and fence mounted signage.
- Re-located entrance area and access driveway.

- and revised site layout from that previously granted KA/121032 and all ancillary site works.

**KA/121032:** Planning permission granted by the Planning Authority in August 2013 for development consisting of:

- The construction of rear extension to existing cottage type dwelling incorporating tea/coffee and sanitary facilities for visitors to Sliabh na Cailli.
- Make amendments and alterations to external elevations of existing cottage to include the installation of a thatched roof.
- Refurbish existing cottage internally.
- Upgrade entrance and provide a small car-park and
- To complete all ancillary site works.

## **5.0 Policy and Context**

### **5.1. National Policy**

#### **5.1.1. Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (NPF) Local Policy**

National Policy Objective (NPO) 22 seeks 'Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level'. NPO 23 is also of relevance to the development proposal and it seeks to 'Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism'.

#### **5.1.2. Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (RSES).**

As regional level Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 4.79 seeks to ensure that 'Local authorities shall identify and provide policies that recognise the contribution that small towns, villages and rural areas contribute to social and economic wellbeing. As part of

this policy provision that seeks to support and protect existing rural economies such as valuable agricultural lands to ensure sustainable food supply, to protect the value and character of open countryside and to support the diversification of rural economies to create additional jobs and maximise opportunities in emerging sectors, such as agri-business, renewable energy, tourism and forestry enterprise is supported.

RPO 6.8 of the RSES seeks 'To support the sustainable development of tourism in the Region in line with the strategic objectives of both Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands experience brand propositions'.

In terms of 'Natural and Cultural Tourism Assets', RPO 6.16 seeks to 'Support working with relevant landowners and recreational/ tourism agencies to increase access to the countryside and coastal areas to ensure maintenance of the existing network. RPO 6.17 also seeks to 'Support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.

**5.1.3. Code of Practice – Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤ 10), 2021.**

The EPA CoP 2009 was revised in March 2021. The 2009 CoP may continue to be used for site assessments and subsequent installations commenced before 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 or where planning permission has been applied for before that date.

**5.2. Local Policy**

**5.2.1. Meath County Development Plan (CDP), 2021-2027.**

The appeal is located within a rural area outside of a designated settlement boundary and within a 'Low Development Pressure Area' (Area 3), as per Map 9.1 of the current CDP. Given the nature of the proposed development, tourism related policies of the current CDP which are relevant to the consideration of this appeal include:

**ED POL 42:** To facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, restaurants, car and coach parking and toilet facilities in the designated hubs throughout the County.

**ED POL 43:** To promote the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment for the County. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment).

**ED POL 44:** To support the development of new tourist facilities or upgrading/extension of existing tourist facilities at tourist sites within the County such as the Hill of Tara, Loughcrew and Trim Castle in conjunction with OPW and DCHG in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 and with proper Planning and sustainable development principles. These facilities should avail of shared infrastructure and services where possible, and will be designed to the highest architectural and design standards.

**ED POL 45:** To encourage new and high-quality investment in the tourism industry in the County with specific reference to leisure activities (including walking, cycling, angling, equestrian and family focused activities) and accommodation in terms of choice, location and quality of product.

**ED OBJ 74:** To support the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment for the County. (Refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment).

**ED POL 60:** To support the development and improvement of tourist facilities at historical sites in the County only in instances where the development does not damage the resource or prejudice its future tourist value in any way, particularly in and proximate to the Brú na Boinne and Hill of Tara areas to be undertaken in conjunction with OPW and DCHG.



**ED POL 64:** To facilitate the development of a variety of quality tourist accommodation tourist types, at suitable locations, throughout the County.

**ED POL 65:** To positively consider the development of new hotels in existing settlements, with particular preference for locations in larger settlements such as Navan. In rural locations (i.e. villages / rural nodes), it must be demonstrated that: (i) the area proposed to be served by the new development has high visitor numbers associated with an existing attraction / facility; been identified having regard to the profile of the visitor and the availability and proximity of existing hotels in the area; and (iii) The distance of the location from a significant settlement is such that visitors to area/attraction are unlikely to avail of existing hotel facilities.

**ED POL 67:** To encourage touring/holiday vehicles, caravan, and camping sites to locate adjacent to or within existing settlements or established tourism facilities, having due regard to surrounding land uses and proper Planning and development of the area.

**ED POL 70:** To ensure that the provision any accommodation (ED POL 69 refers), shall not be occupied as permanent place of residence. This accommodation type will in any event only be considered favourably in the case of refurbishment and adaptation of a Protected Structure or group of structures within attendant grounds for tourism use.

**ED POL 71:** To encourage proposals to reinstate, conserve and/or replace existing ruinous or disused dwellings for holiday home purposes subject to normal Planning considerations relating to design, safe access and provision of any necessary wastewater disposal facilities.

**ED POL 72:** To require new holiday home / self-catering developments to locate within either established settlements or at established tourism / recreation facilities, other than those developments involving the renovation / conversion of existing buildings.

In terms of Archaeological Heritage, the current CDP contains the following policies and objectives which are relevant to the consideration of the application:

**HER POL 1** To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects...

**HER POL 2** To protect all sites and features of archaeological interest discovered subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monument and Places, in situ (or at a minimum preservation by record) having regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and The Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

**HER POL 3** To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.

**HER POL 4** To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length; or developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery as identified by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

**HER OBJ 2** To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detracting from the monument or its setting.

**HER OBJ 3** To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.

In terms of landscape capacity, the current CDP contains the following policies and objectives which are relevant to the consideration of the application:

**HER POL 52** To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.

**HER POL 53** To discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amount of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.

**HER OBJ 49** To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations.

**HER OBJ 50** To require landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with planning applications for development which may have significant impact on landscape character areas of medium or high sensitivity.

The current CDP notes that the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, had an objective to explore the designation of Landscape Conservation Area(s), in respect of their core areas for (a) Tara Skryne area (s) and (b) Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills. I note that **HER POL 54** is directly applicable to the development proposal and seeks:

- To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting and amenity of the Tara landscape and Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills.

Section 8.18 of the current CDP relates to 'Views and Prospects' and includes the following objective of note:

**HER OBJ 56** To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.

In terms of wastewater disposal and treatment, **RD POL 46** seeks:

- To ensure that new development is guided towards sites where acceptable wastewater treatment and disposal facilities can be provided, avoiding sites where it is inherently difficult to provide and maintain such facilities. Sites prone to extremely high water tables and flooding or where groundwater is particularly vulnerable to contamination shall be avoided.

### **5.3. Natural Heritage Designations**

There are no European designated sites within the immediate vicinity of the site. The nearest designated site is the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299), c. 7km to the north-east of the site.

### **5.4. EIA Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale the development and the development to be retained, 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 First Party planning appeal has been submitted and prepared on behalf of the Applicant. The appeal submission provides a description of the site and surrounds, an overview of the proposed development and provides additional background information with respect to the existing operations. The appeal submission also provides an overview of the policy at local and national level that is relevant to the development proposal and sets out how the proposed development accords with this policy. In addition, the submission summarises the planning history of the appeal site and provides a description of the master plan that has been prepared for the overall landholding.

In terms of Refusal Reason 1, the following is noted:

- It is stated that the appeal site functions as part of a well-established tourism facility and the Applicant has a genuine interest in being positive custodians of this area and clearly have an interest in promoting this area as a destination for visitors. It is highlighted that this development it's not a standalone one off development but it's part of an overall phased development which has taken place over time which must be taken into account in setting the baseline criteria

for assessing the proposed development in the context of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).

- The LCA for this area clearly states that there is medium capacity to absorb tourism related facilities. Therefore, the approach taken by the Planning Authority is unreasonable as it adopts a blanket ban approach to any form of expansion of the tourism accommodation on offer at the Loughcrew visitor centre. The LCA clearly supports the development of tourism related facilities at this location. However, the LCA policy in respect of Loughcrew is outdated and makes no reference to the contribution the Loughcrew Megalithic Visitor Centre and associated facilities makes to the area which have all been developed since this LCA policy was prepared. The Applicant's family have improved visitor facilities, have developed parking and signage along with other tourism related facilities such as the visitor center, toilets, coffee shop, museum, traditional cottage and arts venue. All of these have been delivered at their own private expense for the improvement of facilities available to visitors to Loughcrew.
- Given the fact that the log cabin is set back well from the public road where it can maximise the screening on three sides by existing hedge row, it is submitted that this accords with the policy of providing facilities in a low key manner.
- In terms of the need to respect the vernacular character of the surrounds, it is submitted that the proposed development is modest in its scale and form which is respectful of the vernacular with the modest footprint and appropriate pitch on the Gable. Reference is also made to similar log cabin development within the surrounds of the appeal site.
- The Applicant is in the process of implementing a landscaping scheme of native plant species of mature and semi mature planting in order to speed up the absorption of the development into the landscape.
- It is commented that there has been no objection to the proposed development from the Department of Arts ,Heritage and the Gaeltacht or from An Taisce in respect that the proposed development, notwithstanding the location of the appeal site relative to the National Monument and the designated landscape.

- It is acknowledged that there is a protected view which is a panoramic view of national importance within the surrounds of the appeal site. However, the LCA clearly confirms that there is medium capacity for the absorption of tourism accommodation and there is no prohibition of such development within this area.
- In support of the appeal, a visual inspection of the proposed development from the protected viewpoint was undertaken and a photographic survey accompanies the appeal submission.
- It is stated that the log cabin is located between the two hills and therefore does not appear to be elevated. The proposed wellness area is to be located to the rear of the building and therefore will not be visible from the public road. The proposed outdoor recreational area and arts room would represent a positive contribution to the social infrastructure of the area and would provide a break in the appearance of the roof.
- It is stated that the building log cabin is clustered within the established tourism complex and it is contended that if permitted, would not detract from the visual amenity or integrity of this area.

In terms of Refusal Reason 2, the following is noted:

- It is stated that the Planning Authority ignores LCA policy that seeks to promote the development of additional tourism facilities in this area and also ignores the fact that the LCA policy states that there is medium capacity for the absorption of such facilities in the landscape.
- The appeal submission disagrees with the suggestion that the proposed development would be unduly prominent when it is only visible in the immediate local landscape and they disagree with the suggestion that it would detract from the natural interest and beauty when the purpose of the proposed structure is to provide for overnight accommodation for visitors to the area. The proposed development is providing additional tourism facilities to promote this area as a place for visitors to come and experience the amenity of the area and therefore the proposed development should be supported in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- A site specific Visual Impact Assessment was carried out in respect of the proposed development by an independent architect. The Visual Impact Assessment confirms that the Development Plan does not prohibit such developments in this area but rather seeks to improve the range of such facilities in this area. The Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application confirms that while the visual impact of the proposed log cabin is significant, this is a local view and it does not impact directly on the view of Carnbane East. It is confirmed that the proposed development does not break the skyline and is partially obscured by trees and most importantly is a use category compatible with the potential of the area and is supported by the LCA policy and the Development Plan.

In terms of Refusal Reason 3, the following is noted:

- It is stated that an application for retention should not confer an advantage or disadvantage over an application. In this instance it would seem that this reason for refusal is being predetermined based on the nature of this retention application
- The reason for refusal completely ignores the very substantial investment that the applicant has privately made in the delivery of tourism facilities at this location over the past number of years. The applicant's record in the delivery of tourism facilities is obvious and it is disingenuous in this reason for refusal to suggest that there is a risk that this element of the development in respect of which permission is sought would not be completed or retained in accordance with any permission.

## **6.2. Planning Authority Response**

A response has been received from the Planning Authority dated 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022 which confirms that the content of the First Party appeal has been noted, and that all matters raised have previously been addressed in the Planning Report dated 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The Planning Authority request the Board to uphold the decision to refuse planning permission.

### **6.3. Observations**

None.

### **6.4. Further Responses**

None sought.

## **7.0 Assessment**

The main issues are those raised in the grounds of appeal, the Planning Report and the reasons for refusal, and I am satisfied that no other substantive issues arise. The issue of appropriate assessment also needs to be addressed. The issues can be dealt with under the following headings:

- Principle of Development
- Siting, Design & Visual Impact
- Archaeological Heritage
- Other Matters
- Appropriate Assessment

### **7.1. Principle of Development**

7.1.1. The proposed development seeks to regularise the planning status of various works that were undertaken on site without the benefit of planning permission. These works relate to the construction of an existing 1.5 storey log cabin structure for use as tourism related accommodation, the installation of an existing wastewater treatment system (wwts) and associated site works. The proposal also seeks planning permission for additional works on the appeal site comprising:

- Upgrading the existing waste water treatment system and percolation area to serve the log cabin.
- Removal of the existing vehicular entrance and hardcore surface driveway leading to the log cabin from the public road.
- The provision of a new gravelled access leading from the area of the site containing the existing yurts to the log cabin.
- The construction of an outdoor recreational and arts room with covered patio area which is ancillary to the log cabin and located on its northern side.



- The construction of a rental bike storage shed which is located adjacent to the existing on site meeting room (adjacent to existing thatched structures within the eastern portion of the site).
- The construction of a covered outdoor wellness, sauna and hot tub area to the south of the existing log cabin.
- The construction of a barbeque hut adjacent to the existing yurts.
- All ancillary site works with landscaping.

7.1.2. The appeal is located within a rural area outside of a designated settlement boundary and within the historical area of Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh. The existing log cabin forms part of a relatively recently permitted tourism complex and there is an extensive history of planning applications on the appeal site dating back to c. 2013. I note that the Planning Authority have previously refused permission to retain the log cabin type structure in question, on 2 no. separate occasions under Ref. Nos. 21/1675 and KA/200995. The permitted tourism related facilities on the appeal site comprise a single storey cottage and group of thatched structures (which are in use as a museum, visitor centre, coffee shop, meeting rooms, toilet facilities, reception/office, games room, cooking and dining areas), 6 no. 'yurt' type structures for overnight accommodation and associated facilities and 2 no. grassed and hardstanding areas which are used for camping (including campervan parking bays) and associated lighting (1 camping area permitted on a temporary basis). The application and appeal documents highlight that the Applicant has generational ties to this area. The tourism complex is known collectively as the Loughcrew Megalithic Centre, which the Applicant established c. 5 years ago and developed a range of facilities to cater for day trippers and overnight visitors. Given the location of the appeal site in the context of Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh, the established and authorised uses on the appeal site and the general policy support, from local through to national level for tourism related development as outlined in Section of this report, I am satisfied that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable at this location. However, I note ED POL 43 of the current CDP seeks 'to promote the development of sustainable tourism and encourage the provision of a comprehensive range of tourism facilities, subject to satisfactory location, siting and design criteria, the protection of

environmentally sensitive areas and areas identified as sensitive landscapes in the Landscape Character Assessment for the County'. Therefore, the issue that needs to be ascertained is whether the proposed development and the development to be retained is acceptable on this specific site, taking into consideration the design and layout, visual impact and character, archaeological heritage and the sustainable planning and development of the area. The following sections of this report will discuss each matter in further detail.

## **7.2. Siting, Dwelling Design & Visual Impact**

- 7.2.1. The existing log cabin structure has an 'A' framed, pitched roof form and is of timber construction with a maximum stated height of c. 8.9m. The structure, which is in use as overnight accommodation, has a stated floor area of c. 182sq.m. and is set back c. 70m from the existing road side boundary. The structure is currently accessed via a gravel driveway from the public road to the north and I note that the structure is elevated relative to the existing roadside boundary. The existing roadside boundary comprises a hedgerow interspersed with a number of mature trees. Upon inspecting the appeal site, it was evident that some landscaping works had been undertaken on site with some tree planting provided on the northern side of the log cabin.
- 7.2.2. The appeal site is located within the Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Landscape Character Area (No. 19) (Map 01), and is identified as being of 'Exceptional Landscape Value' (Map 02) and 'High Landscape Sensitivity' (Map 03) as per the Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix 5) which forms part of the current CDP. In terms of potential capacity, the LCA indicates that there is 'Medium potential capacity for new visitor facilities or enhancement of existing facilities providing they are designed in a sensitive, low-key manner that reflects local vernacular. Such development may provide opportunities to enhance landscape management by assisting agricultural diversification.' The appeal site is also located within c. 600m of the Slieve na Calliagh Protected View which is of National Significance and described within Appendix 10 (Protected Views and Prospects) of the current CDP as 'Panoramic views in all directions including intervisibility between the 3 peaks. Site of high cultural and scenic significance characterised by absent or very low levels of enclosure'. Within their

assessment of the planning application, the Planning Authority refer to commentary of their Conservation Officer on an earlier application. This application also sought permission to retain the structure in question, and it was highlighted that the structure sits within a very sensitive landscape setting, densely scattered with megalithic passage tombs, cairns and rock art and it was indicated that the proposal negatively affects their character and setting. It was stated that the structure is clearly visible from numerous sites around Loughcrew Cairns, and negatively affects the view and experience and enjoyment of the site. By reason of its design, appearance and materials, the Planning Authority consider the development to be at variance with the rural vernacular traditions and would not be in accordance with the current Meath Rural Design Guide and would be totally out of character with this very sensitive rural landscape.

- 7.2.3. In addition to the retention of the existing structure, the proposal includes the provision of additional facilities associated with the overnight accommodation within the attendant grounds of the log cabin. The proposed works comprise a recreation and arts room to the north of the building with a connecting roof canopy. I note that the timber structure (c. 33sq.m. GFA) has a pitched roof form with a maximum height of c. 5.6m and is of a similar architectural style to that of the log cabin. A structure comprising a hot tub and sauna area is also proposed to the rear (south) of the cabin. This structure is of a similar design with a pitched roof and a maximum height of c. 4.9m. The site layout plan identifies screening on its eastern side. However, I note that no details are provided with respect to the height or materials of this screening mechanism. Further to the east of the site, the proposal seeks to construct a BBQ hut which is to be located within the portion of the larger landholding comprising the 'yurt' style overnight accommodation. Again, this building (c. 17sq.m. GFA) is of a similar architectural style, with a pitched roof form and a height of c. 5.1m. The proposal seeks to close up the existing vehicular entrance which provides access to the log cabin, to reinstate the soil and grass in lieu of the existing gravel driveway and provide a new internal gravelled driveway providing access from the 'yurt' area to the western portion of the site containing the cabin.

7.2.4. In support of the planning application, the Applicant has submitted a Heritage Visual Impact Assessment (VIA). It would appear that the VIA was prepared and submitted in support of an earlier application on the lands as the description of the proposed development (as per Page 17) includes the retention of the log cabin and various other works which do not come within the scope of this appeal. In addition, it does not list any of the additional works which form part of this development proposal as listed above. As part of the VIA, a total of 7 no. viewpoints are provided from within the surrounds of the appeal site and are illustrated in Figure 11 of the VIA. In terms of the 'Significance of the Visual Effect', the results of the VIA can be summarised in the following table:

<b>Viewpoint</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Viewpoint 1 (Public Road west of campsite towards Carnbane East/Cairn T) (i.e. location of Protected View under current CDP)	Very Significant to Significant
Viewpoint 2 (Campsite towards Carnbane East/Cairn T)	Very Significant
Viewpoint 3 (Campsite towards Carnbane West/Cairn K)	Very Significant
Viewpoint 4 (From entrance to Cairn K/Carnbane West towards campsite)	Moderate
Viewpoint 5 (From lands to south of campsite towards campsite)	Significant
Viewpoint 6 (From entrance to Cairn N towards campsite)	Slight
Viewpoint 7 (From gate into to Cairn T enclosure/Carnbane East towards campsite)	Moderate

7.2.5. The VIA concludes that the development does have a visual impact within the Loughcrew landscape. However, it is stated that the visual impact of the development is considered acceptable subject to various mitigation measures. I note that these mitigation measures include cladding the building in a white material, in addition to supplementary site landscaping. Although I acknowledge that there is support for the promotion of sustainable tourism and the provision of a comprehensive range of

tourism facilities at this location, the policy clearly stipulates these facilities shall be designed to the highest architectural and design standards (ED POL 44) and in a sensitive, low-key manner that reflects local vernacular (Appendix 5, LCA). Having inspected the appeal site and surrounds, including observing the site from longer views (i.e. summit of Cairn T/Carnbane East (Slieve na Calliagh Protected View)), I would share the concerns of the Planning Authority with respect to visual impact of the proposed development. The existing cabin is prominently located on an elevated portion of the site and significantly removed from the existing cluster of authorised buildings on the larger landholding. I note that these buildings are single storey and are of an architectural form which are generally in keeping with the vernacular character of the surrounds. This cannot be said for the log cabin structure, which could be described as being 'alien' to this landscape. I also have concerns with respect to the additional structures being proposed which are of a similar design and will act to compound and exacerbate the adverse visual impact of the existing development. I also wish to highlight that the VIA submitted with the application fails to have regard to these additional works which form part of this development proposal. I consider the proposed mitigation measures as outlined within the VIA to be entirely unacceptable in this instance and it is not an appropriate design solution to rely on a cladding material or proposed landscaping to mitigate the potential visual impact of the proposal, particularly in a landscape that is of 'Exceptional Landscape Value' and 'High Landscape Sensitivity'. Whilst I acknowledge that the principle of improving tourism facilities is acceptable and encouraged, the development as proposed, by reasons of its siting, design and visual prominence, would result in a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and should therefore be refused planning permission. Any future proposals to consolidate or enhance the existing tourism offer that is provided on site, should be the subject of a carefully considered response which has due regard to the sensitivities of the site and surrounding area and the vernacular character of the surrounds.

### **7.3. Archaeological Heritage.**

- 7.3.1. I note that the surrounds of the appeal site display a rich archaeological heritage given its location in the context of Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh. This is a sensitive

archaeological landscape and is significant for a series of passage tombs at the top of the hills dating back from c. 3000BC. I note that there is no report on the planning file from the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. However, within the Planning Authority's assessment of the application, reference is made to the Conservation Officer's commentary with respect to a preceding application, where they state that 'Any proposal for development within this site, due to its sensitive archaeological context, would have been subject to archaeological testing as a minimum requirement before any form of development would be considered – unfortunately this has not happened'. It is also commented that the unauthorised development should be carefully removed. I note that a 'Report on Archaeological Assessment' did accompany the planning application. However, all test trenches were excavated after the construction of the log cabin.

- 7.3.2. In addition, I refer to HER OBJ 2 and HER OBJ 3 of the current CDP, which seeks 'To ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Zone of Archaeological Potential is sited and designed in a sensitive manner with a view to minimal detracting from the monument or its setting' and 'To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development', respectively. As detailed earlier in this report, I have inspected the appeal site and surrounds, examined the VIA and application documents and I note that I have significant concerns with respect to the visual impact of the proposed development and the development to be retained on this site. Having regard to the design and siting of the proposed development and the development to be retained and its location at a removed distance from the cluster of existing authorised structures, I consider the proposal to form a visually incongruous feature in this landscape of Archaeological sensitivity. It is for this reason, that I recommend that planning permission be refused. As noted earlier, any future proposals to consolidate or enhance the existing tourism offer that is provided on site, should be the subject of a carefully considered response which has due regard to the sensitivities of the site and surrounding area.

#### **7.4. Other Matters**

- 7.4.1. The Planning Authority's third reason for refusal was included as follows:

- 'In accordance with section 35 of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2021, the planning authority considers that there is a real and substantial risk that this element of the development in respect of which permission is sought would not be completed or retained in accordance with any permission or any condition to which such a permission would be subject.'

Having reviewed the detailed planning history of the site, I note that there is a record of works on site that appear to have been undertaken without the benefit of planning permission. Applications were then submitted to regularise their planning status. I also note that there are conditions relating to extant planning permissions which require works to be undertaken on the appeal which have not yet been commenced. Notwithstanding this, I consider this to be reasonable in this instance given the scope of the proposed works which forms part of this planning appeal. Given my recommendation to refuse permission for the proposed development as outlined in the foregoing sections, I do not consider the inclusion of this specific refusal reason to be warranted or necessary in this instance in the context of Section 35 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). With respect to the matter of non-compliance, I note that Planning Enforcement is the role of the respective Planning Authority, and An Bord Pleanála has no role in this matter.

7.4.2. I note that the proposal seeks to retain the waste water treatment system (WWTS) which serves the log cabin and also to upgrade the WWTS and percolation area to serve the log cabin. These are to be located within the northern portion of the site. I note the Planning Authority has raised no objection to the Applicant's proposals for the disposal and treatment of wastewater on site subject to standard conditions. Assessment of the wastewater treatment element of a rural one-off house is a standard consideration and is applicable in this instance given the nature of the proposal. The site is in an area with a poor aquifer of high vulnerability. The Site Characterisation Form notes that groundwater was encountered at a depth of 0.9m in the 1.5m deep trial hole. Bedrock was not encountered at a depth of 1.5m. Table E1 (Response Matrix for DWWTs) of the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Wastewater Treatment (Population Equivalent  $\leq 10$ ), 2021, identifies an R1 response category i.e.

“Acceptable subject to normal good practice (i.e. system selection, construction, operation and maintenance in accordance with this CoP).

- 7.4.3. The T-test result was 69.47 which and the P-test 43.53. Section 3.1 of the Site Characterisation Form states the ground condition was firm underfoot at the time of inspection. However, rushes were observed in the lower section of the site and the adjoining fields. I observed this to be the case when inspecting the site. Section 5.0 (Recommendation) of the Site Characterisation Form notes that due to the poor drainage of the site and the water table at 0.9m, it is proposed to install an effluent treatment system and carry out site improvement works. These works include the importing of a minimum of 1.2m of suitable percolating material between the base of the lowest part of the percolation area/soil polishing filter and the winter groundwater level/bedrock at all times. I note that no information has been submitted with respect to the existing WWTS. Should the Board be minded to grant permission for the proposed development, I would recommend the inclusion of a condition which shall require the design and installation of the proposed WWTS to comply with the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems, Population Equivalent  $\leq$  10 (2021).

## **7.5. Appropriate Assessment**

- 7.5.1. The nearest designated site is the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299), located c. 7km to the north-east of the site. I note the un-serviced nature of this rural location which means that the site does not benefit from access to public mains drainage or water supply. I also acknowledge the prevalence of agricultural activities in the immediate vicinity. Despite these factors, I am nonetheless of the opinion that taking into consideration the modest nature, extent and scope of the proposed development and the development to be retained and based on best scientific information alongside having regard to the documentation on file which includes a Site Characterisation Report, that no appropriate assessment issues arise and that the proposed development and the development to be retained would not be likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 site.



## **8.0 Recommendation**

I recommend that the planning application be refused for the following reasons and considerations.

## **9.0 Reasons and Considerations**

1. The appeal site is located within the 'Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Character Area' (Appendix 5: Landscape Character Assessment) which has a designation of Exceptional Value, of High Sensitivity and of National and International Importance in the Meath County Development Plan, 2021 – 2027. In addition, the site is located within 600m of, and visible from Slieve na Calliagh Protected View and Prospect, which is of National Importance and described as a 'panoramic view in all directions including intervisibility between the three peaks. Site of high cultural and scenic significance characterised by absent or very low levels of enclosure'. Having regard to design, architectural form and prominent siting of the proposed development and the development to be retained, and its location at a removed distance from the established cluster of tourism related buildings, the proposed development and the development to be retained would form a permanent and incongruous feature in this historic landscape and an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from the areas natural interest and beauty. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would interfere with the character of the landscape and a view or prospect of special amenity value and is contrary to policies and objectives (HER POL 52, HER OBJ 56 and HER OBJ 49) of the Meath County Development Plan, 2021 – 2027. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. The appeal site is situated within a landscape that displays a rich archaeological heritage and is located within the 'Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills Landscape Conservation Area'. Having regard to the design, architectural form and prominent siting of the proposed development and the development to be retained, and its location at a removed distance from the established cluster of tourism related buildings, the proposed development and the development to be retained would form an unduly prominent and visually obtrusive feature detracting from the

areas archaeological heritage and rural character. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would adversely impact this landscape conservation area and is contrary to Policy HER POL 54 of the Meath County Development Plan, 2021 – 2027, the objective of which seeks ‘To protect the archaeological heritage, rural character, setting and amenity of the Tara landscape and Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills’. The proposed development and the development to be retained would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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Enda Duignan

Planning Inspector

26/01/2023