

Inspector's Report ABP-313718-22

Development Construction of a house

Location White Bay, Trabolgan, Whitegate, Co.

Cork

Planning Authority Cork County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref. 224587

Applicant(s) Jerome & Alice Good

Type of Application Permission

Planning Authority Decision Refuse Permission

Type of Appeal First Party

Appellant(s) Jerome & Alice Good

Date of Site Inspection 1st September 2022

Inspector Liam Bowe

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located in a rural area approximately 2km to the south of Whitegate village and 12km to the south of Midleton town in Co. Cork. It is accessed from a county road to the east, via the public car park serving White Bay beach, then via the pedestrian access (1.8m wide macadam path) serving the beach, and a further overgrown path (c.50m in length) to the south. The local road is narrow but is wide enough to facilitate passing cars but the pedestrian access to the beach and overgrown path to the appeal site would not be capable of accommodating vehicular traffic.
- 1.2. The appeal site is stated to be 0.062 ha. in area. The site has a pedestrian access only from the public car park serving White Bay beach. The site overlooks White Bay from an elevated location adjacent to a cliff. There is evidence of a structure on the appeal site with remnants of a foundation present on the day of my site inspection. There is an electricity pole present on the site. The western site boundary is open; the southern and northern boundaries are hedgerows; and the eastern site boundary is an earthen bank and from inspection of the site appears likely to have formed part of the cliff before being dug out to accommodate the previous structure on the site. The appeal site is relatively flat, is presently overgrown and not in use.

2.0 **Proposed Development**

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises the construction of a house, a boiler house, the widening of the pedestrian access to the beach, the installation of a domestic wastewater treatment system (DWWTS), a connection to the public water supply and associated site development works at White Bay, Trabolgan, Whitegate, County Cork.
- 2.2. The proposed dwelling is dormer in design with a maximum ridge height of 6.839m, with render finish and blue / black slates. The proposed dwelling will have an area of 93.4m². The existing site boundaries are to be retained and some planting is indicated immediately to the north and south of the proposed house.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. **Decision**

By order dated 10th May 2022 Cork County Council issued a notification of decision to Refuse Permission for the proposed development for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposal relates to permission for the construction of a dwelling unit within the Rural Area Under Strong Urban Influence, as designated in the Cork County Development Plan (2014, as amended). Within this area, applicants must demonstrate that their proposal constitutes a genuine rural generated housing need based on their social / economic links to a particular rural area. Based on the details submitted with the application, the Planning Authority is not satisfied that the applicants have demonstrated a genuine rural generated housing need for a dwelling at this location and that they meet the criteria as set out under objective RCI 4-2 of the Cork County Development Plan (2014, as amended). It is therefore considered that the proposed development would conflict with the settlement policies (RCI 2-1 and RCI 4-2) contained in the Cork County Development Plan (2014, as amended), would set an undesirable precedent for other such development outside a designated development boundary and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and development of the area.
- 2) The site is located which is in a highly sensitive coastal location and is classed as 'high value landscape' under the provisions of the current Cork County Development Plan (2014, as amended). It is a stated objective of the County Development Plan under objective RCI 6-1 to encourage built forms that fit appropriately into the landscape and objective GI 7-1 to preserve the visual and scenic amenities of rural areas and to protect sensitive coastal landscapes. The proposed development, if permitted would materially contravene these objectives and would be significantly detrimental to the visual and scenic amenity of the area. Accordingly, to grant permission would be contrary to the proper planning and development of the area.
- 3) The proposed development cannot be accessed satisfactorily and would endanger public safety by means of a traffic hazard because the walkway

- serving the site from the public car park is narrow and inadequate to cater for any vehicular movements likely to be generated by the development during construction, maintenance or its daily use.
- 4) Based on the details submitted, the Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposed development can be satisfactorily served by a private foul effluent treatment system given the requirement to regularly de-sludge this unit and the access difficulties maintenance of same would generate. Accordingly, to grant permission would be prejudicial to public health because the nature of the terrain and access arrangements renders the site unsuitable for an on-site foul effluent treatment system.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The report of the Planning Officer dated 6th May 2022 outlines the relevant planning policy under the Cork County Development Plan 2014, outlines the relevant planning history and notes both the internal consultations and the objection received. The Planning Officer outlines concerns in relation to housing need, access, visual amenity and public health. The Planning Officer and Senior Executive Planner recommends that permission be refused consistent with the notification of decision which issued.

Appropriate Assessment Screening was carried out and concluded that there was no likely potential for significant effects to any Natura 2000 site.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Area Engineer: The Engineer's report dated 5th May 2022 outlines concerns about access to the site and the treatment of wastewater and recommends that permission be refused.

Ecology: The Ecologist's report dated 5th May 2022 outlines concern s regarding the lack of information to enable an assessment of the ecological impact of the proposed development.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

None.

3.4. Third Party Observations

There was a submission made on the planning application outlining concerns in relation to traffic safety, subsidence, pollution and visual amenity.

4.0 **Planning History**

4.1. Appeal site:

P.A. ref. no. 06/13657: Permission granted for a one and a half storey house.

P.A. ref. no. 11/6134: Extension of duration granted until 24th day of September 2017 for a one and a half storey house granted permission under P.A. ref. no. 06/13657.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National Planning Framework

5.1.1. The NPF in relation to rural housing includes objective 19 which states -

Ensure, in providing for the development of rural housing, that a distinction is made between areas under urban influence i.e., within the commuter catchment of cities and large towns and centres of employment, and elsewhere:

- In rural areas under urban influence, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable economic or social need to live in a rural area and siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements; and
- In rural areas elsewhere, facilitate the provision of single housing in the countryside based on siting and design criteria for rural housing in statutory

guidelines and plans, having regard to the viability of smaller towns and rural settlements.

5.2. Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005)

5.2.1. The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines require planning authorities to differentiate between rural housing demand arising from rural housing need and housing demand arising from proximity to cities and towns. Additionally, development plans should distinguish rural areas under strong urban influence, stronger rural areas, structurally weak rural areas and areas with clustered settlement patterns. The guidelines state that development management policy should be tailored to manage housing demand appropriately within these areas.

5.3. Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Board should note that the Planning Authority carried out their assessment of the proposed development based on the policies and objectives contained in the Cork County Development Plan 2014. The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 came into effect on 6th June 2022.

5.3.1. Renovation or Replacement of an Uninhabitable or Ruinous Dwellings Section 5.12.1 of the Plan states:

"In the case of uninhabitable or ruinous dwellings, where the existing dwelling structure is substantially in place, the renovation / redevelopment or replacement of same for use as a dwelling will be considered on a case-by-case basis, having regard to an appropriate scale and design of building, normal planning considerations and the requirements of other relevant policies and objectives in this plan. It is not the intention of the settlement policy objectives of this plan generally to prevent such development. A ruinous dwelling still in place is defined as a structure formerly used as a dwelling, with the main walls substantially intact."

Objective RP 5-30: Redevelopment or replacement of an Uninhabitable or Ruinous dwelling

Encourage proposals for the sensitive renovation, redevelopment, or replacement of existing uninhabitable or ruinous dwellings subject to normal proper planning and

sustainable development considerations as well as the requirements of other objectives in this Plan and provided that it satisfies the following criteria:

- The original walls of the dwelling structure must be substantially intact.
- The structure must have previously been in use as a dwelling.
- The development is of an appropriate scale and design (including materials used), relative to the structure being replaced and the location and character of the site.
- Existing mature landscape features are retained and enhanced, as appropriate.
- No damage shall be caused to sites used by protected wildlife.
- Proposals must be acceptable in terms of public health and traffic safety.
- 5.3.2. The appeal site is located in an area designated as a 'Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence'. The Plan states:

"The rural areas of the Greater Cork Ring Area outside the Metropolitan Greenbelt are now within easy commuting distance of Cork City as a result of road and infrastructural improvements. These areas exhibit characteristics such as rapidly rising population, evidence of considerable pressure from the development of (urban generated) housing in the open countryside due to proximity to such urban areas / major transport corridors, pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network and higher levels of environmental and landscape sensitivity."

Objective RP 5-4: Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence and Town Greenbelts (GB 1-1)

The rural areas of the Greater Cork Area (outside Metropolitan Cork) and the Town Greenbelt areas are under significant urban pressure for rural housing. Therefore, applicants must satisfy the Planning Authority that their proposal constitutes a genuine rural generated housing need based on their social and / or economic links to a particular local rural area, and in this regard, must demonstrate that they comply with one of the following categories of housing need:

(a) Farmers, their sons and daughters who wish to build a first home for their permanent occupation on the family farm.

- (b) Persons taking over the ownership and running of a farm on a full-time basis.
- (c) Other persons working full-time in farming (or part time basis where it can be demonstrated that it is the predominant occupation), forestry, inland waterway or marine related occupations.
- (d) Persons who have spent a substantial period of their lives (i.e. over seven years), living in the local rural area in which they propose to build a first home for their permanent occupation.
- (e) Returning emigrants who spent a substantial period of their lives (i.e. over seven years), living in the local rural area.
- 5.3.3. The appeal site is located within an area of West Cork designated as a 'High Value Landscape'.

Objective GI 14-9: Landscape

- a) Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment.
- b) Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land-use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.
- c) Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.
- d) Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.
- e) Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.

5.3.4. **Groundwater Protection**

Objective WM 11-5: Discharges in Unsewered Areas

a) Ensure that proposals for development incorporating on-site wastewater disposal systems comply with the EPA Code of Practice Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems March 2021 (Population Equivalent ≤ 10) and Wastewater Treatment Manual - Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business Centres, Leisure Centres and Hotels (1999), or relevant successor

- approved standards / guidelines (including design, installation and maintenance). The cumulative impact of such systems will also be considered in the assessment process.
- b) Continue to support the roll out of the National Inspection Plan 2018–21 for domestic waste-water treatment systems, and any successor plans, with prioritisation of Blue Dot Catchments and Protected Areas.
- c) Protect the County's waters from wastewater pollution, through the implementation of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 to 2007, ensuring that all development shall comply with the provisions where applicable.

5.4. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not located within any designated site. The closest Natura 2000 site is Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) which is located approximately 1.9km to the north and 3.1km to the west of the appeal site. Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 001058) is located approximately 7.9km to the north of the site.

5.5. **EIA Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and separation from sensitive environmental receptors, I am satisfied that no likely significant impacts on the environment arise from the proposed development and that the carrying out of an EIA is not required in this case.

6.0 **The Appeal**

6.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

- 6.1.1. The grounds of appeal are submitted by Patrick A. Cashman, Architectural Technician, Farren House, Cork Road, Midleton, Co. Cork on behalf of the First Parties, Jerome & Alice Good. The main points made can be summarised as follows:
 - Includes details of the historical background of the appeal site.

- Contends that the First Parties have family connections with the area since 1958.
- Advises that the First Parties are amenable to re-submitting an alternative house design for consideration.
- States that the First Parties are satisfied to use the public car parking facility with occasional vehicular access to the house.
- Confirms that de-sludging of a treatment system in a house that is not in yearround occupation will be infrequent and that there are smaller desludging trucks/vans designed for narrower access routes.

Historical photographs of a chalet on the site are included with the appeal.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

The Planning Authority has not responded to the grounds of the appeal.

6.3. Observations

- 6.3.1. An observation was received from Ken & Gillian McIlreavy, Primrose Cottage, Jamesbrook, East Ferry, Midleton, Co. Cork. The observers raised the following issues:
 - Contends that the pedestrian footpath used to access White Bay beach is not suitable for use as a vehicular access to the appeal site.
 - Concerned that a house on the edge of the cliff will be in danger of subsidence.
 - Concerned that effluent from the septic tank/wastewater treatment system will drain onto the beach.
 - Contends that a house at this location would be an obtrusive feature on the landscape and that this area is not suitable for the development of housing or other structures.

7.0 Assessment

I consider that the main issues in the assessment of this appeal are as follows:

- Rural Housing Policy
- Visual Impact
- Traffic Safety
- Disposal of Wastewater
- Appropriate Assessment

7.1. Rural Housing Policy

- 7.1.1. Under the grounds of appeal, the First Parties have included details of the historical background of the appeal site highlighting the presence of a three bedroomed dwelling on the site when they purchased it in 1985. I note photographic evidence of this submitted with the appeal that demonstrates a structure with galvanised sheeting on the walls and roof. The First Parties also contend that they have family connections with the area since 1958.
- 7.1.2. On the day of my site inspection, I noted the presence of the remnants of a foundation for this structure. The First Parties have stated that the structure was destroyed by fire in 2005. Cork County Council granted permission for a replacement house in 2006 and extended this permission in 2012. However, no works have been carried out on the site. Cork County Council's policy as set out in paragraph 5.12.1 and **Objective RP 5-30** of the County Development Plan is clear on the redevelopment or replacement of an uninhabitable or ruinous dwellings and has a number of criteria that must be satisfied, including inter alia:
 - 1) The original walls of the dwelling structure must be substantially intact, and
 - 2) Proposals must be acceptable in terms of public health and traffic safety.
- 7.1.3. I am satisfied that the original walls of the structure are not present and there is no existing dwelling on the site. Therefore, the proposed development should not be assessed under the Council's policy under the redevelopment or replacement of an

- uninhabitable or ruinous dwellings. I will therefore assess the proposed development under Cork County Council's Rural Housing Policy.
- 7.1.4. National guidance as set out in the National Planning Framework and in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines emphasise the need to distinguish between areas that are under urban influence or pressure and other rural areas and in addition, to differentiate between urban and rural generated housing need.
- 7.1.5. The appeal site is located in an area designated as a 'Rural Areas under Urban Influence' under the current Cork County Development Plan. This area is described as one where 'evidence of considerable pressure from the development of (urban generated) housing in the open countryside due to proximity to such urban areas / major transport corridors, pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network and higher levels of environmental and landscape sensitivity'. Objective RP 5-4 seeks to facilitate the provision of dwellings for persons who have a genuine rural generated housing need based on their social and / or economic links to a particular local rural area and must demonstrate that they comply with one of the categories of housing need outlined in 5.3.1 above.
- 7.1.6. The First Parties submitted supplementary information with the appeal outlining their ownership of the site and their stated use of the structure on the site as a holiday home between 1985 and 2005. They further state that Jerome Good's father lived in a coastguard property in the area from 1958 and that his sister presently occupies this property. It is also stated that another sister and brother of Jerome Good reside in houses in Roches Point and White Bay, respectively.
- 7.1.7. In terms of Objective RP 5-4 and the requirements of the rural housing policy, the application can be summarised as follows:
 - a) The application is not being made by a farmer, or their son / daughter who is seeking to build their first home for permanent occupation on the family farm.
 - b) The applicants are not taking over the running of a farm on a full-time basis and have not stated their employment or its location.
 - c) The applicant has not provided information of working in other essential rural activities.

- d) On the basis of the information provided, I consider that the First Parties have not demonstrated that they have spent a substantial period of their life (over 7 years) in this rural area.
- e) The applicant is not a returning emigrant.
- 7.1.8. Therefore, I am not satisfied that the information provided forms a clear basis for compliance with rural housing policy set out in the development plan and, consequently, forms a basis for a need to live at this rural location in accordance with the policy set out in the County Development Plan. The applicant's housing needs could clearly be met within Cork City or alternatively within another town or settlement in the vicinity of the appeal site.
- 7.1.9. On the basis of the above, I do not consider that the applicants meet the requirements of the Cork County Development Plan relating to rural housing in an area designated as 'Rural Area under Urban Influence' such as the appeal site. I also consider that the proposed development would be contrary to the National Planning Framework and the Sustainable Rural Housing guidelines. The applicants have not, therefore, demonstrated that they can meet the requirements of the settlement policy as set out in Objective RP 5-4.

7.2. Visual Impact

- 7.2.1. The proposed development is located within a highly sensitive coastal location and was classed as 'high value landscape' in the Cork County Development Plan 2014 (as amended). The Planning Authority considered that the proposed development contravened policy objectives RCI 6-1 and GI 7-1 of the 2014 Plan, which seeks to encourage built forms that fit appropriately into the landscape and to preserve the visual and scenic amenities of rural areas and to protect sensitive coastal landscapes, respectively.
- 7.2.2. This landscape classification and associated objectives were carried forward to the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028. Under the new Plan, policy **Objective GI 14-9** seeks to prevent inappropriate new dwelling houses unless there is an acknowledged local rural generated housing need. As outlined under section 7.1 of this report, I am not satisfied that the First Parties have demonstrated a need for a

- house at this rural location in accordance with the requirements of the County Development Plan.
- 7.2.3. Furthermore, the First Parties propose a storey and a half house at 6.839m in height with a living room at first floor level on this elevated and visually sensitive site overlooking White Bay. There is no detailed site analysis or design statement included with the appeal / application outlining the reasoning for this. There may be a practical reason for this associated with the requirement for separation distances on the site, but I consider it is, more likely, to avail of the views of White Bay to the southwest of the appeal site.
- 7.2.4. Given that the appeal site is located within an area of County Cork with a designation of a 'High Value Landscape', where it is an objective (GI 14-9) of the plan to protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment, I consider that the proposed development does not constitute an exception to the restriction on new houses within this 'High Value Landscape' and would, therefore, detract to an undue degree from the rural character and scenic amenities of the area and would constitute an undesirable precedent for development of this nature in a scenic, sensitive coastal landscape.

7.3. Traffic Safety

- 7.3.1. The access to the appeal site is approximately 250m from the public road off the pedestrian access to White Bay beach. The First Parties have indicated that it is their intention to park their car(s) in the public car park that serves White Bay beach and that infrequent vehicular use of the pedestrian access will be required during construction and maintenance of the proposed house and associated wastewater treatment system.
- 7.3.2. Following my site inspection, I noted that parking is freely available at this public car park but the access to the car park is restricted by a c.2m high barrier at the entrance. I also noted the substandard nature of the pedestrian access to the beach / appeal site for vehicular movements. The surface of the path is finished in macadam, but it only measures 1.8m in width i.e., a footpath. The path to the appeal site off the pedestrian access to the beach is also narrow and, in its present condition, could only accommodate pedestrians. I note that it may be possible to

widen this path, but the First Parties have not included any part of the access to the appeal site within the site edged red and have given no evidence that they would be legally entitled to carry out any works to the access to facilitate vehicular access to the appeal site.

7.3.3. On the above basis, the material submitted with the application and my observations, I consider that any vehicles accessing the appeal site would pose a danger to the public using this access to White Bay beach. I consider that the appeal site is unsuitable in terms of access, that the proposed development would lead to a serious risk to public safety, and I therefore recommend including this as a reason for refusal.

7.4. Disposal of Wastewater

- 7.4.1. The First Party excavated the trial hole to a depth of only 0.7m as bedrock was encountered i.e., silt with gravel and boulders were present at this depth and no water table was visible. It is confirmed within the Site Characterisation Report that the appeal site is located over a locally important aquifer with extreme vulnerability, which requires a Groundwater Protection Response of R2¹. The T Value is stated as 18.25 (surface). Based on these results, the Site Assessor recommended a proprietary wastewater treatment
- 7.4.2. On the day of my site inspection, I noted that the ground conditions were good and consistent with those described within the Site Characterisation Form. I also note that the Site Assessor has highlighted the requirement for de-sludging the prechamber of the proposed wastewater treatment plant every 5-7 years. Ordinarily, this would be a relatively straightforward requirement however, given the significant constraints accessing the appeal site (as outlined in Section 7.3 of this report), I consider that this would not be a practical or viable option for the appropriate treatment of wastewater on the site. On the above basis, I consider that the proposed method of disposing wastewater on the appeal site is not acceptable and would pose a risk to public health in the area.
- 7.4.3. In conclusion, based on the material submitted with the application and my observations, I consider that the appeal site is unsuitable for the safe disposal of domestic effluent and, notwithstanding the installation of a proprietary wastewater

treatment system, that the proposed development would lead to a serious risk to public health.

7.5. Appropriate Assessment

Having regard to the nature and scale of the development proposed and the absence of any direct or indirect pathway between the appeal site and any European site and the separation distances to the nearest European site (Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030)), no Appropriate Assessment issues arise, and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

8.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission be refused for the reason stated below.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to:

- The location of the site within a rural area identified as being a 'Rural Area under Urban Influence' in accordance with the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2005 and under the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028,
- National Policy Objective 19 of the National Planning Framework
 (February 2018) which seeks to facilitate the provision of single housing in
 the countryside based on the core consideration of demonstrable
 economic or social need to live in a rural area, having regard to the
 viability of smaller towns and rural settlements,
- The provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and specifically Objective RP 5-4, which facilitates the provision of rural housing for local rural people building in their local rural area, and

• The absence of documentary evidence on the file outlining the location of the applicants' existing dwelling and need to live in this rural area, the Board could not be satisfied on the basis of the information on the file that the applicant comes within the scope of either economic or social housing need criteria as set out in the overarching National Guidelines or the definition of a local rural person in accordance with the relevant criteria of the development plan.

The proposed development, in the absence of any identified locally based need for a house at this location, would result in a haphazard and unsustainable form of development in an unserviced area, would contribute to the encroachment of random rural development in the area and would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and the efficient provision of public services and infrastructure and undermine the settlement strategy set out in the development plan. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The site is designated as 'High Value Landscape' under the provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 where it is an objective (GI 14-9) of the plan to protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment and to protect skylines and ridgelines from development. This designation and policy are considered reasonable. Having regard to the design and siting of the proposed development it would detract to an undue degree from the rural character and scenic amenities of the area, would be contrary to the provisions of Cork County Development Plan and would constitute an undesirable precedent for development of this nature in a scenic, sensitive rural landscape designated 'High Value Landscape' in the Cork County Development Plan. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- 3. The proposed development is located off the pedestrian access to White Bay beach which is inadequate in terms of width and structural condition to accommodate vehicular traffic movements likely to be generated by the proposed development. The proposed development would, therefore, endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard.
- 4. The Board is not satisfied that the regular maintenance that would be required to the proposed on-site wastewater treatment system, including de-sludging, necessitating vehicular access to the site could not be achieved in a satisfactory manner. It is considered, therefore, that the proposed development would be prejudicial to public health.

Liam Bowe Planning Inspector

24th November 2022