

# Inspector's Report ABP-315704-23

Development	Construction of house, domestic garage/fuel store, waste water treatment system and associated site works.			
Location	Abbert Demesne, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway			
Planning Authority	Galway County Council			
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2260498			
Applicant(s)	Katherine Coppinger			
Type of Application	Permission			
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission			
Type of Appeal	Third Party			
Appellant	Mary Fleming			
Observer(s)	None			
Date of Site Inspection	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2023			
Inspector	Ian Campbell			

ABP-315704-23

# 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located on the western side of a private road, south-east of the junction with the L-7202 at Abbert Demense, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway. The appeal site is located in a rural area outside of a settlement.
- 1.2. The appeal site has a stated area of 0.298 Ha. and forms part of a larger field. The appeal site is broadly rectangular in shape and is relatively flat. The boundaries of the appeal site comprise trees and hedgerow. A drainage ditch is indicated on the Site Layout Plan running along the southern boundary of the appeal site.
- 1.3. The lands to the north and west are indicated as being within the applicant's control/ownership, as depicted by the blue line boundary<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.4. There are a number of detached dwellings located to the north of the appeal site, and along the L-7202.

# 2.0 **Proposed Development**

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises;
  - Construction of a part single-storey/part two-storey, 4 bedroom house;
    - stated floor area c. 250 sqm.
    - maximum ridge height c. 8.2 metres.
    - material finishes to the proposed house comprise nap plaster and natural stone for the external walls and blue/black roof slate.
    - positioned c. 35 metres from the roadside boundary.
  - Construction of domestic garage/fuel store;
    - stated floor area c. 59 sqm.
    - maximum ridge height c. 5 metres.
    - material finishes match the proposed dwelling.
  - Installation of proprietary waste water treatment system and percolation area.
  - Landscaping and associated site works.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See OS map submitted as Further Information on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

# 3.0 **Planning Authority Decision**

#### 3.1. Request for Further Information

Prior to the decision of the Planning Authority to grant permission for the proposed development, the Planning Authority requested Further Information.

#### 3.1.1. Further Information was requested as follows:

<u>Item 1:</u> submit Land Registry/Folio documentation for the site and demonstrate that the applicant's family home is within 8 km of the site.

Item 2: demonstrate ability to access site.

<u>Item 3:</u> submit revised site layout plan indicating lands to north where roadside boundary is to be maintained within blue line boundary of site.

#### 3.1.2. Further information submitted on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### Item 1:

- details of ownership of family home submitted (Folio GY5508F registered to John and Connie Coppinger, the applicant's parents).
- location of family home indicated on map (c. 7km from the application site by road/5km from the application site as the crow flies).

#### Item 2:

- the applicant's parents own the private road which will serve the proposal (Folio GY36691 refers.)
- other landowners have a right-of-way over the private road. OS map submitted indicates right-of-way along the road. Access to the graveyard is also facilitated via this right-of-way.
- the road is maintained by the Local Authority who funded 90% towards the costs of its maintenance.
- use of the road is not restricted to landowners and users of the graveyard.

#### Item 3:

- OS map submitted indicating the lands to the north within the control/ownership of the applicant, i.e. within blue line boundary of site.

#### 3.2. Decision

The Planning Authority issued a Notification of Decision to GRANT Permission on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023 subject to 15 no. conditions. The conditions were standard in nature.

#### 3.3. Planning Authority Reports

- 3.3.1. Planning Reports
- 3.3.2. The <u>first report</u> of the Planning Officer generally reflects the issues raised in the request for Further Information.

Request for Further Information recommended.

3.3.3 The <u>second report</u> of the Planning Officer notes that the Further Information submitted is generally considered acceptable.

The report of the Planning Officer recommends a <u>GRANT</u> of permission consistent with the Notification of Decision which issued.

#### 3.3.4. Other Technical Reports

None.

#### 3.4. **Prescribed Bodies**

None.

#### 3.5. Third Party Observations

The report of the Planning Officer summarises the main issues raised in the third-party observations as follows:

• Access road is private.

- Road is used by walkers and visitors to the graveyard.
- Applicant is not local.

# 4.0 **Planning History**

Appeal Site:

None.

# 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1. **Development Plan**

# 5.1.1. National Planning Framework (NPF) – Project Ireland 2040 (2018)

### National Policy Objective 19 states -

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.

### 5.1.2. Code of Practice Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (p.e. ≤ 10)2021

The Code of Practice (CoP) sets out guidance on the design, operation and maintenance of on-site wastewater treatment systems for single houses.

### 5.1.3. Ministerial Guidance

# Sustainable Rural Housing, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005)

The appeal site is located within an area identified as a 'Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure' (Rural Housing Zone 2 GCTPS, see Map 4.1 and 4.2 Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028). The Guidelines state that these areas exhibit characteristics such as proximity to the immediate environs or close commuting catchment of large cities and towns, rapidly rising population, evidence of considerable pressure for development of housing due to proximity to such urban areas, or to major

transport corridors with ready access to the urban area, and pressures on infrastructure such as the local road network.

#### 5.2. **Development Plan**

- 5.2.1. The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 is the relevant development plan. The appeal site is not subject to any specific land-use zoning under the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The appeal site is located within the Galway County Transportation and Planning Study Area (GCTPS). The appeal site is located within an area identified as a 'Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure (Rural Housing Zone 2 GCTPS' - see Map 4.1 and 4.2 Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028).
- 5.2.2. The provisions of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 2028 relevant to this assessment are as follows:

<u>Policy Objective RH2:</u> Rural Housing Zone 2 (Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure-GCTPS-Outside Rural Metropolitan Area Zone 1)

<u>DM Standard 28</u> – Sightline distances required for access onto National, Regional, Local and Private Roads

5.2.3. In terms of Landscape Character Type, the appeal site is located within the 'North Galway Complex Landscape' (see Appendix 4 of CDP), which has a 'low' landscape sensitivity. The appeal site is not affected by any protected views (see Map 08, Appendix 4) or scenic routes (see Map 09, Appendix 4).

### 5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

- Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code: 000297) c. 0.5 km north.
- Killaclogher Bog NHA (Site Code: 001280) c. 0.4 km east.

### 5.4. EIA Screening

(See Form 1 and Form 2 attached to this report) Having regard to the limited nature and scale of development and the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity of the site, as well as the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, 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

This is a <u>third-party</u> appeal by Mary Fleming against the decision to grant permission. The grounds for appeal may be summarised as follows;

- Permission for a dwelling was refused under PA. Ref. 044529 on a site in the vicinity on the grounds that the site was unsuitable for the treatment of effluent and on the basis of the capacity and width of the road. These issues remain relevant to the current proposal.
- The application site is c. 300 metres from a site linked to the Cistercian Abbey in Abbyknockmoy. Given the archaeological potential of the site, an Archaeological report should have been submitted with the planning application.
- The L-7202 is a public road whereas the road onto which access is proposed (referred to by the appellant as 'Moor Road') is not taken in charge. The applicant erroneously states that the L-7202 is not a public road and that Moor Road is a public road.
- The road surface and alignment of Moor Road is inadequate and would not be sufficient to accommodate construction traffic, which would damage the road and drains. It is unclear who would be responsible for repairing any damage to the road or who would be liable if injury occurs to somebody using the road.
- Sightlines exiting Moor Road onto the L-7202 are inadequate.
- The applicant and her family are from outside the parish and have no connection to the area. With the exception of the applicant's family home and farm, the applicant has no economic or social links to the area and has not demonstrated compliance with Objective RH4<sup>2</sup> of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The application does not refer to the family farm. There is no reference to lands owned in Garbally.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> I note that Objective RH4 relates to Rural Housing Zone 4 (Landscape Classification 2, 3, and 4).

- The applicant's father inherited another farm and farmhouse from a relative in 2015.
- Information submitted in the application is untrue as it relates to when the applicant's father began farming.
- The farm and farmhouse have only been in the applicant's families ownership for 7 years, and not 20 as required under Objective RH19 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- The applicant could reside in the farmhouse which is located in the middle of the family farm, as opposed to building a new house at a location away from the family farm.

### 6.2. Applicant Response

None received.

### 6.3. Planning Authority Response

None received.

### 6.4. **Observations**

None received.

# 7.0 Assessment

- 7.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the appeal, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant national and local policy and guidance, I consider the main issues in relation to this appeal are as follows:
  - Rural Housing Policy
  - Access
  - Waste Water
  - Other Issues

• Appropriate Assessment

### 7.2. Rural Housing Policy

- 7.2.1. The appellant contends that the applicant is not from the local area, and does not comply with the requirements of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 as it relates to housing in the rural area.
- 7.2.2. The appeal site is identified in the Galway County Development Plan 2022 2028 (see Map 4.2) as being within Zone 2 Galway County Transport & Planning Study (GCTPS), corresponding to an 'Area Under Strong Urban Influence'. Policy Objective RH 2 applies to Rural Housing Zone 2 (Rural Area Under Strong Urban Pressure GCTPS-Outside Rural Metropolitan Area Zone 1) and sets out specified circumstances where applicants may be considered eligible for a dwelling in a rural area. Having reviewed the information submitted by the applicant I consider that Policy Objective RH2 1 (a) is the relevant criterion in this instance, and provides;

Those applicants with long standing demonstrable economic and/or social Rural Links<sup>\*</sup> or Need to the area through existing and immediate family ties seeking to develop their first home on the existing family farm holding. Consideration shall be given to special circumstances where a landowner has no immediate family and wishes to accommodate a niece or nephew on family lands. Documentary evidence shall be submitted to the Planning Authority to justify the proposed development and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

7.2.3. Based on the documentation submitted with the planning application I note that the applicant has resided at the family home (Currandoo, Monivea), which is located in a rural area and is within 8km of the application site, for a duration exceeding 7 no. years. Regarding the requirements of Policy Objective RH2 1 (a), I am therefore satisfied that the applicant has 'long standing demonstrable economic and/or social Rural Links<sup>3</sup> or Need to the area', and that the proposal is for permission to build the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Rural Links are defined in the Development Plan as 'a person who has strong demonstrable economic or social links to the rural area and wishes to build a dwelling generally within an 8km radius of where the applicant has lived for a substantial continuous part of their life. To have lived in the area for a continuous seven years or more is to be recognised as a substantial, continuous part of life and also as the minimum period required to be deemed longstanding residents of the area'.

applicant's first home. I therefore consider that the applicant has demonstrated compliance with the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 in relation to proposals for single housing in the rural area.

7.2.4. The information submitted with the planning application intimates that the applicant is engaged in farming. No information has been submitted in respect of the applicant's role in the family farm/farming activity. I have therefore confined my assessment to the provisions of Policy Objective RH2 1 (a) of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

#### 7.3. Access

- 7.3.1. The appellant notes that the road onto which access is proposed is a private road and is not taken in charge, raises concerns in relation to the potential impact of construction traffic using this road, and also the adequacy of sightlines at the junction with the L-7202. The appellant also refers to a previous decision where the Planning Authority refused permission for a dwelling in the vicinity of the application site on the grounds of the inadequacy of this road in relation to its capacity and width.
- 7.3.2. Access to the proposed development is via a narrow road which is not indicated as being taken in charge on Galway County Council's GIS system. The applicant has submitted Folio maps indicating that the road is within the applicant's parent's ownership and that other parties have a right-of-way over facilitating the use of the road. I note that the appellant is not disputing the applicant's ability to use this road.
- 7.3.3. I consider the private road onto which access is proposed to be seriously substandard at this location due to its narrowness, which poses a danger for pedestrians using the road, particularly given the absence of footpaths and public lighting. Whilst there are no other dwellings located along the private road and the road appears to be minimally trafficked, I note that there is a graveyard situated at the end of the road, and that other parties have a right-of-way over the road and as such I consider that the road has potential to generate demand in terms of traffic and pedestrian usage. The width of the road for long sections makes it impossible for two cars to pass, requiring reverse manoeuvres, including at the junction with the L-7202 should two cars met. Having regard to the forgoing, I consider that the traffic generated by the proposed

development would endanger public safety and would give rise to a potential traffic hazard and on this basis I recommend that permission is refused.

- 7.3.4. No speed limit applies to the private road onto which access is proposed, however based on the width and alignment of the road I consider it reasonable to base sightline requirements on a 30 kmph design speed. DM Standard 28 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 2028 requires sightlines of 35 metres for roads with a design speed of 30 kmph. Sightlines of 63.5 metres to the north and 70 metres to the south are indicated on the Proposed Site Layout Plan. A letter of consent from the landowner to the south of the appeal site accompanied the planning application in relation to the maintenance of sightlines and the lands to the north are in the ownership of the applicant's parents. I am therefore satisfied that the required sightlines are achievable and that they can be maintained.
- 7.3.5. The appellant raises concerns in relation to sightlines at the junction with the L-7202. I note that the area south-west (turning left) of this junction is within the applicant's parent's ownership and therefore visibility could be improved/maintained. Based on my site inspection I note that visibility to the north-east appears to be unobstructed.
- 7.3.6. The appellant raises concerns in relation to the potential for damage to be caused to the private road during the construction of the proposed development. Having regard to the nature and extent of the proposal I am satisfied that the proposed development would not result in significant damage to the local road network. Given that the road onto which access is proposed is a private road I consider this issue to be a civil issue.

#### 7.4. Waste Water

7.4.1. The Site Characterisation Report submitted with the application identifies that the subject site is located in an area with a 'Regionally Important Aquifer' where the bedrock vulnerability is 'High'. A ground protection response to R2(1) is noted. Accordingly, I note the suitability of the site for a treatment system subject to normal

good practice<sup>4</sup>. The applicant's Site Characterisation Report identifies that there is no Groundwater Protection Scheme in the area.

- 7.4.2. The trial hole depth referenced in the Site Characterisation Report was 2.1 metres. Neither bedrock nor the water table were encountered in the trial hole. Water ingress into the trial hole was indicated at a depth of 0.6 metres. The soil conditions found in the trial hole are described as comprising gravelly silt/boulder clay. Percolation test holes were dug and pre-soaked. A T value/sub-surface value of 5.53 was recorded. A P value/surface test was not carried out. Based on the EPA CoP 2021 (Table 6.4) the site is suitable for a secondary treatment system and soil polishing filter. I was unable to inspect the trial hole at the time of my site inspection.
- 7.4.3. The Site Characterisation Report submitted with the application concludes that the site is suitable for treatment of waste water. I am satisfied that the proposal complies with the required separation distances set out in Table 6.2 of the CoP 2021.
- 7.4.4. The EPA CoP 2021 (paragraph 5.4.2.) requires that *'in all cases where regionally important aquifers underlie the site, or for GWPRs of R22 , R23 , R24, R31 or R32 , the trial hole depth should be at least 3 m (if possible) in order to prove that the existing vulnerability classification, as determined during the desk study, is correct'.* Based on the depth of the trial hole, which is significantly less than the minimum depth required in the EPA CoP, I am not satisfied that the appropriate vulnerability classification has been demonstrated. Additionally, the Site Characterisation Report submitted by the applicant refers to water ingress in the trial hole at 0.6 metres (bgl)<sup>5</sup>, which is suggestive of a high water table. I note that 0.9 metres of unsaturated soil/subsoil is required between the point of infiltration and the water table. Noting the absence of a sectional drawing of the proposed percolation area it is unclear if this is achievable.
- 7.4.5. In summation, as the depth of the trial hole is less than the minimum required in the EPA CoP 2021 for areas identified as being underlain by Regionally Important Aquifers, noting the ingress of water into the trial hole at the level indicated, which is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Where domestic water supplies are located nearby particular attention should be given to the depth of subsoil over bedrock such that the minimum depths in Chapter 6 are met and the likelihood of microbial pollution is minimised.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Below Ground Level.

suggestive of a high water table and the absence of detail in respect of the provision of the required depth of soil/subsoil between the point of infiltration and the water table, and the fast draining nature of the site as indicated by the subsurface test results, I am not satisfied that the treatment of effluent on the site can be catered for without a risk to groundwater and on this basis I recommend that permission is refused. I submit to the Board that this is not a new issue as the issue of the suitability of the site to cater for the treatment of effluent was raised in the appellant's submission.

### 7.5. Other Issues

7.5.1. The appellant contends that an Archaeological report should have accompanied the planning application given the archaeological potential of the site, specifically the proximity of the application site to an historical site linked to the Cistercian Abbey in Abbyknockmoy. Having reviewed the National Monuments Service's map viewer I note that there are no Recorded Monuments on the appeal site. The closest Recorded Monument is located 250 metres north of the appeal site (Ref. GA058-003 – Country House refers). Additionally, I note a cluster of Recorded Monuments (Ref. GA058-002001 - Ecclesiastical Enclosure; GA058-002002 – Church; and GA058-002003 – Graveyard) c. 0.5 km metres south of the appeal site. Noting the absence of Recorded Monuments on the appeal site and the distance to Recorded Monuments in the area I am satisfied that there is no requirement for an Archaeological report to be submitted in this instance.

#### 7.6. Appropriate Assessment

7.6.1. Having regard to the nature and limited scale of the proposed development and the lack of a hydrological or other pathway between the site and European sites, it is considered that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect either individually or in combination with other plans or projects on any European site.

# 8.0 **Recommendation**

8.1. Having regard to the above it is recommended that permission is refused based on the following reasons and considerations.

# 9.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

- The site is located on a road which is considered seriously substandard in terms of width, posing a danger for pedestrians using the road, particularly given the absence of footpaths and public lighting. Additionally, the width of the road for long sections makes it impossible for two cars to pass, requiring reverse manoeuvres. Therefore, the traffic generated by the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of traffic hazard and obstruction of road users.
- 2. Having regard to the excavation depth of the trial hole, which is less than the minimum required in the EPA CoP 2021 for areas identified as being underlain by Regionally Important Aquifers, the ingress of water into the trial hole indicated in the Site Characterisation Form, which is suggestive of a high water table, and the absence of detail in respect of the provision of the required depth of soil/subsoil between the point of infiltration and the water table, the Board is not satisfied that the site is capable of treating foul effluent arising from the dwelling and considers that the method of foul water disposal will render the treatment of the effluent unacceptable and could increase the risk of serious water pollution. Accordingly, the proposed development would be prejudicial to public health and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Ian Campbell Planning Inspector

# Appendix 1 - Form 1

# **EIA Pre-Screening**

[EIAR not submitted]

An Boro Case Ro			ABP-315704-23				
-	roposed Development ummaryConstruction of house, domestic garage/fuel store, waste water treatment system and associated site works				waste water		
Develop	Development Address Abbert Demesne, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway				way		
	-	-	velopment come within	the definition of a	Yes	Х	
<ul><li>'project' for the purposes of EIA?</li><li>(that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)</li></ul>			No	No further action required			
2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?							
Yes			EIA Mandatory EIAR required		,		
Νο		X	Proceed to Q.3		eed to Q.3		
3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?							
			Threshold	Comment	C	onclusion	
				(if relevant)			
No			N/A		Prelir	IAR or ninary nination red	
Yes		Class 10, ( dwelling ur	b), (i) (threshold is 500 nits)	Significantly below threshold.	Proce	eed to Q.4	

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?			
No	X	Preliminary Examination required	
Yes		Screening Determination required	

Inspector: Ian Campbell

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

# Form 2

# **EIA Preliminary Examination**

An Bord Pleanála Case	ABP-315704-23			
Reference				
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of house, domestic garage/fuel store, waste water			
Summary	treatment system and associated site works			
Development Address	Abbert Demesne, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway			
The Board carries out a preliminary examination [Ref. Art. 109(2)(a), Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)] of, at least, the nature, size or location of the proposed development having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.				
	Examination	Yes/No/ Uncertain		
		Uncertain		
<ul> <li>Nature of the Development</li> </ul>				
<ul> <li>Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</li> </ul>	The proposed development comprises 1 no. house, garage and waste water treatment system within a rural area.	• No		
• Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, emissions or pollutants?	The proposed development will not give rise to the production of significant waste, emissions or pollutants.	• No		
Size of the Development				
• Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?	The size of the proposed development would not be described as exceptional in the context of the existing environment.	• No		
<ul> <li>Are there significant cumulative considerations having regard to other existing</li> </ul>	There are no significant developments within the vicinity of the site which would result in significant cumulative effects/considerations.	• No		

and/or permitted projects?					
<ul> <li>Location of the Development</li> </ul>					
• Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to significantly impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?	No     Having regard to the limited nature and scale of     development and the absence of any significant     environmental sensitivity in the vicinity of the site, as     well as the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the     Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as     amended, there is no real likelihood of significant     effects on the environment arising from the     proposed development. The need for environmental				
• Does the proposed development have the potential to significantly affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?	impact assessment can, therefore, be preliminary examination and a determination is not required.	• No			
Conclusion					
• There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment	There is significant and realistic doubt regarding the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.			
• EIA not required. • Schedule 7A Information required to enable a Screening Determination to be carried out.		<ul> <li>EIAR requ</li> </ul>	EIAR required.		

# Inspector: Ian Campbell

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

DP/ADP: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)