



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-315872-23

Development	Demolition of exiting front façade to old dwelling and removal of structures from the site. Construction of 4 no. new townhouses and two-storey apartment building and all associated site works and services.
Location	Turlough Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Planning Authority	Mayo County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	22/481
Applicant(s)	Val & Clare Baynes
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant, subject to 25 conditions
Type of Appeal	Third Parties -v- Decision
Appellant(s)	The Oaks Residents' Association Farnan & Gillian Harte
Observer(s)	None

Date of Site Inspection

12th May 2023

Inspector

Hugh D. Morrison

Contents

1.0 Site Location and Description	4
2.0 Proposed Development	4
3.0 Planning Authority Decision	5
3.1. Decision	5
3.2. Planning Authority Reports	5
4.0 Planning History.....	6
5.0 Policy and Context.....	6
5.1. National Planning Documents.....	6
5.2. Development Plan.....	7
5.3. Natural Heritage Designations	8
5.4. EIA Screening	8
6.0 The Appeal	8
6.1. Grounds of Appeal	8
6.2. Applicant Response	10
6.3. Planning Authority Response.....	10
6.4. Observations.....	10
6.5. Further Responses	11
7.0 Assessment.....	11
8.0 Recommendation.....	20
9.0 Reasons and Considerations.....	21

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is located in the north-eastern residential suburbs of Castlebar, some 0.8km from the town centre. This site lies on the south-eastern side of Turlough Road (L1719), and it adjoins this Road along its north-western boundary, which is denoted by means of a low wall.
- 1.2. The site is of regular shape, and it extends over an area of 0.31 hectares. This site is vacant and overgrown at present. It contains the front façade of a former dwelling, a freestanding building, and a shipping container. The site abuts the Oaks Housing Estate along its eastern and south-eastern boundaries. The former boundary is set back from the initial portion of the estate road beyond a wide grass verge, which contains a row of oak trees. (This row is paralleled by another row of oak trees in the grass verge on the opposite side of the road). The latter boundary runs along the extremities of the rear gardens to the dwelling houses at Nos. 12, 13 & 14 The Oaks. Both boundaries are denoted by walls. The south-western boundary abuts farmland beyond, and it is denoted by a hedgerow. The remaining boundaries wrap around the extremities of the two rear gardens to dwelling houses on Turlough Road and the side boundary of the more easterly of these two residential properties. These boundaries are denoted by walls and a hedgerow respectively.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Under the proposal, the front façade of a former dwelling and a freestanding building (28 sqm) would be demolished.
- 2.2. Under the proposal as originally submitted, 4 no. three-bed townhouses and a two-storey building comprising 2 no. two-bed/four-person apartments would be constructed (total floorspace 644.6 sqm). The townhouses would be sited in the north-eastern portion of the site, and they would face Turlough Road. The apartment building would be sited in the north-western portion of the site and it, too, would face Turlough Road. This building would be of elongated form and its long side elevations would correspond with the length of the rear gardens to the neighbouring dwelling houses on this Road. A new site access would be formed from Turlough Road. The site access road would serve two car parks, one of which would be forward of the townhouses (10 no. spaces) and one of which would be in the south-western portion

of the site (7 no. spaces). The latter would be accompanied by bin and bicycle storage facilities. The remaining south-western portion of the site would be laid out as rear gardens to the townhouses and open space.

- 2.3. Under the revised proposal, 7 no. dwelling houses would be constructed, i.e., 2 no. single storey dwelling houses in the northern portion of the site, a two-storey detached dwelling house and a pair of two-storey semi-detached dwelling houses in the centre of the site, and a pair of two-storey semi-detached dwelling houses in the south-western portion of the site. The 2 no. single storey dwelling houses would be served by parallel parking spaces on the nearside of Turlough Road, while the remaining dwelling houses would be served by a new access point from the initial portion of the estate road. The accompanying on-site access road would have 9 no. spaces laid out along it, i.e., 4 no. parallel spaces and 6 no. perpendicular ones. Shared open space would be laid out in the south-eastern corner of the site and along its eastern boundary. A footpath would run around the on-site access road and pass through the eastern shared open space.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Following the receipt of further information, permission was granted, subject to 25 conditions. Several of these conditions require amendments to the revised proposal, i.e., Condition 5 requires that the two-storey dwelling houses have hipped roofs and that dwelling house No. B-5 have first floor windows in its exposed side elevation, which would overlook the eastern shared open space, and Condition 6 requires a buffer zone between the single storey dwelling houses and the public footpath.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

Under further information, the PA requested that the applicant revise the proposed access arrangements to avoid overlapping with Sheridan's Road, the L17197 on the opposite side of Turlough Road, clarify boundary treatments, and revise the site layout to provide roadside frontage development and to ensure that informal

surveillance of the shared open space would occur. The applicants responded by submitting their revised proposal, which the PA accepted, subject to the above cited amending conditions.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Mayo County Council

- Area Engineer: Proposed access opposite an existing access to L17197 would contravene relevant standards set out in Item 16.5.1 and Table 4 of Volume 2 of CDP. Following receipt of further information, no objection, subject to conditions.
- Architect: Following receipt of further information, no objection, subject to conditions.

4.0 Planning History

None

5.0 Policy and Context

5.1. National Planning Documents

- National Planning Framework

NPO 35 states the following:

Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, reuse of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.

- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (SRDUA) Guidelines
- Urban design Manual
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)
- Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities: Best Practice Guidelines

5.2. Development Plan

Under the Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (CDP), Castlebar is identified as a Tier 1 Key Town and Strategic Growth Centre. Under Objective SSO 4 of the CDP, the following advice is given on densities:

To apply higher densities to the higher order settlements of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport (see DM Standards), to align with their roles within the settlement hierarchy, subject to good design and development management standards being met.

Section 4.4 of the DM Standards addresses density as follows:

The appropriate residential density of a site shall be determined with reference to.

- *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas –Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and the accompanying Urban Design Manual (2009).*
- *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments 2018.*
- *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines 2018.*

Development of higher level densities shall be appropriate to the site context and shall be assessed based on the merits of the proposal and subject to good design, compliance with both qualitative and quantitative standards, location, capacity of the site and infrastructure to absorb development, existing character of the area, established densities on adjoining sites, protection of residential amenities, proximity to public transport, etc.

The Planning Authority may use its discretion in varying these maximum density standards to take account of the character and context of respective settlements.

Under Objective SSO 13 of the CDP, the following advice is set out:

The land use zoning provisions of the existing town and environs development plans for Ballina, Castlebar and Westport shall continue to be implemented on an interim basis until such time as local area plans are adopted for these towns, whilst also having regard to any draft local area plan, and subject to compliance with the provisions of the Mayo County Development Plan, including the Core Strategy population/housing targets.

Under the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 (DP), the site is zoned Objective A, phase 1, existing residential infill. Section 5.6 of the DP is entitled “Supply of housing land”, and it states the following:

In order to meet the requirement of providing 2,184 Housing Units for the extended period of the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan, the development of residential units on

lands zoned Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Residential lands shall be considered as follows:

Phase 1 Residential Land

All land in Phase 1 shall be developed in compliance with their current zoning as indicated on the Map 1, Zoning / Objective Map and/or in compliance with the existing planning permission (where relevant). Revised proposals for appropriate development on these lands may be considered subject to the requirements of this plan.

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

- River Moy SAC (002298)

5.4. EIA Screening

Under Items 10(b) (i) & (iv) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 to Article 93 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 – 2023, where a proposal is for more than 500 dwelling units and/or it would be on an urban site would exceeding 10 hectares in area the need for a mandatory EIA arises. The proposal is for 7 no. dwelling units and the development of a site with an area of 0.31 hectares. Accordingly, it does not attract the need for a mandatory EIA. Furthermore, as this proposal would fall well below the relevant threshold, I conclude that, based on its nature, size, and location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects upon the environment and so the preparation of an EIAR is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

(a) The Oaks Residents Association

- As revised, the proposed access would be close to a junction/blind bend in The Oaks. It would effectively form a staggered crossroads. Road safety would be further jeopardised thereby.

- The Oaks comprises 80 dwelling houses, which are all accessed from Turlough Road. The proposed access would have an inadequate southerly sightline, and so its use would be hazardous.
- Overflow on-street visitor parking in the vicinity of the entrance to The Oaks would be exacerbated by the proposal.
- Under the revised proposal, the amenities of the dwelling house at No. 12 The Oaks would be adversely affected in terms of safety, privacy, security, pollution, and noise.
- Under the proposal, the revised access would lead to the loss of mature oak trees and the disruption of ground planted with bulbs by local residents.
- The proposal is conditioned to have a wider access road, i.e., a 6m wide carriageway and accompanying 2m wide footpaths. Compliance may entail further tree loss.
- The revised access would disrupt the symmetry exhibited by the initial stretch of the access road to The Oaks.
- The revised access would interrupt a continuous footpath through The Oaks and onwards to local amenities. Health and safety issues would arise thereby. A Lime Bike Park at the entrance to The Oaks is facilitating an increase in cycling, which would also be affected by this revised access.
- The proposal would lead to overlooking of Nos. 12, 13, and 14 The Oaks with a consequent loss of privacy and security.
- Without prejudice to the above grounds of appeal, should the Board grant the proposal, the appellant requests that trees and plants removed should be relocated to the lower green within The Oaks.

(b) Farnan & Gillian Harte of No. 12 The Oaks

- As revised, the proposed access would cross lands outside the red edge of the site: no letter of consent from the relevant landowner has been submitted.
- As revised, the southern sightline from the proposed access would have a y distance of only 10m. The heavily landscaped south-eastern corner of the appellants' property would also restrict visibility.

- The site has a 42m frontage with the initial portion of the access road to The Oaks. The proposed access to the site could be re-sited further away from No. 12 and the site layout rearranged to have rear gardens abut this property. Alternatively, with traffic calming in-situ on Turlough Road, providing access directly from it would be preferable.
- The footpath that would be severed by the proposed access is used more heavily than heretofore due to improved pedestrian facilities in the area.
- The applicant has failed to depict the appellants' property line accurately.
- The appellants reiterate their original objections as follows:
 - As revised, the proposed access would be close to their property resulting in noise and intrusion. It would also result in this property becoming effectively an "island site", as it would be surrounded on three sides by roads.
 - Given the proximity of the proposed access to the bend in the existing access road around the south-eastern corner of the appellants' property, visibility is restricted and so road safety would be jeopardised.
 - The original access off Turlough Road would be preferable: it was deemed unsatisfactory, due to the presence opposite of Sheridan's Lane (L17197). And yet this Lane is lightly trafficked by comparison with the access road in The Oaks.

6.2. Applicant Response

None

6.3. Planning Authority Response

None

6.4. Observations

None

6.5. Further Responses

None

7.0 Assessment

7.1. I have reviewed the proposal in the light of the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (SRDUA) Guidelines, the Urban Design Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS), the Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (QHSC): Best Practice Guidelines, the Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (CDP), the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014 (DP), the submissions of the parties, and my own site visit. Accordingly, I consider that this application/appeal should be assessed under the following headings:

- (i) Legalities,
- (ii) Zoning, housing mix, and density,
- (iii) Development standards,
- (iv) Visual and residential amenities,
- (v) Traffic, access, and parking,
- (vi) Water, and
- (vii) Appropriate Assessment.

(i) Legalities

7.2. Appellants (b) state that the revised site access would cross land outside the red edge of the site and that the owner of this land has not given its consent to the revised application. However, the application, which was revised under further information, is accompanied by a letter from Foxbay Construction Co. Ltd. in which it states that it is aware of the revised site access, and it confirms that it has “no claim nor issue to deny the access to the new adjacent site development.”

7.3. Appellants (b) also state that the applicant has not accurately depicted their property boundary at 12 The Oaks. They acknowledge that questions of title are not for the Board to arbitrate upon. Section 34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 –

2023, by implication, confirms this understanding, i.e., “A person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a permission under this section to carry out any development.”

7.4. I conclude that there are no legalities that would prevent the Board from assessing/determining the application/appeal in the normal manner.

(ii) Zoning, housing mix, and density

7.5. Under the DP, the site is zoned Objective A phase 1, existing residential infill. This site was formerly, at least in part, in residential use, and so its redevelopment/further development for residential use would, in principle, fulfil zoning Objective A for the site.

7.6. Under the revised proposal, the site would be developed to provide 7 no. dwelling houses, 2 no. of which would be two-bed/three-person 83.13 sqm units, and 5 no. of which would be three-bed/five-person 115.2 sqm units. The 2 no. dwelling houses would be detached and single storey. The 5 no. dwelling houses would comprise one detached and two pairs of semi-detached, all of which would be two-storey. The resulting mix of house types and sizes would be satisfactory.

7.7. Under the revised proposal for the 0.31-hectare site, 7 no. dwelling units would be provided, and so a density of 22.58 dwellings to the hectare would be achieved. This density would be similar to that exhibited by some of the existing housing areas in the vicinity of the site.

7.8. Under the SRDUA Guidelines advice is given on residential densities. Insofar as the site was formerly at least partially development, it can be categorised as a brownfield one. Similarly, its size and context are such that it can be categorised as an infill site. Its location is within Castlebar’s north-eastern residential suburbs, some 0.8km from the town centre. The Guidelines address both inner suburban and outer suburban areas.

- The former benefit from existing social and physical infrastructure, and the Guidelines advise that where “character is established by their density and architectural form, a balance has to be struck between the reasonable protection of the amenities and privacy of adjoining dwellings, the protection of established character and the need to provide residential infill.” Under the revised proposal, the pattern of frontage development onto Turlough Road

would be recognised by means of the proposed 2 no. single-storey dwelling houses. In other respects, the site does not relate strongly architecturally to The Oaks housing estate, and so a freer hand is afforded to the designer.

- The latter are on the periphery of settlements and typically require to be serviced. Specific advice on density states that net densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare should generally be discouraged, particularly on sites in excess of 0.5 hectares.

7.9. In the light of the above advice, I consider that the design approach exhibited by the revised proposal would acknowledge the pattern of development along Turlough Road, and, to anticipate my discussion under the fourth heading of my assessment, be compatible with the amenities of existing residential properties. That said, at only 22.58 dwellings to the hectare, the site would *prima facie* be capable of achieving a higher density than that exhibited by the revised proposal.

7.10. I conclude that the proposed redevelopment/development of the site to provide 7 no. dwelling houses would, in principle, fulfil the residential zoning objective for the site. The proposed mix of house types and sizes would be satisfactory. However, the density of the proposal would, at 22.58 dwellings to the hectare, be low for a suburban infill site, and so the advice of the SRDUA Guidelines would not be fully met.

(iii) Development standards

7.11. Under Table 5.1 of the QHSC: Best Practice Guidelines, minimum space provision and room sizes for dwelling houses are recommended. If the revised proposal is reviewed in the light of this Table, the following points arise:

- With respect to the 2 no. single storey dwelling houses, their overall areas and their daytime and storage space components would be satisfactory. Night time space appears to have been designed to accommodate two-bed/four-persons, i.e., the two-bedrooms would have floorspaces of 10.02 sqm and 9.72 sqm. The commentary accompanying Table 5.1 makes clear that double bedrooms should be a minimum of 11.4 sqm and, in dwellings designed to accommodate three or more persons, the main double bedroom should be a minimum of 13 sqm. Single bedrooms should be a minimum of 7.1 sqm. Accordingly, bedroom spaces within these 2 no. dwelling houses should be

reapportioned to ensure that these minimum floor areas can be achieved. If the Board is minded to grant, then this reapportionment could be conditioned. They would thereby present as unambiguously two-bed/three-person units.

- With respect to the 5 no. two-storey dwelling houses, their overall areas and their daytime space component would be satisfactory. Storage space at 4.68 sqm would fall nominally below the minimum of 5 sqm. The two double bedrooms would exceed the relevant minimum floor areas set out above. A third first floor room is designated a study. However, at 8.32 sqm, I consider that it should be regarded as a potential bedroom and so I have treated it as such for assessment purposes.

7.12. Each of the proposed dwelling houses would be accompanied by private open space. This open space would extend over, in the case of the single storey dwelling houses, either 42.1 or 42.2 sqm, and, in the case of the two-storey dwelling houses, between 81 and 234 sqm. The rear gardens to the former dwelling houses would have south-westerly aspects, and the rear gardens to the latter dwelling houses would have either north-westerly or south-westerly aspects. Shared open space would be provided in the south-eastern corner and along the eastern side of the site.

7.13. Within the site, the single storey dwelling houses would correspond with the detached two-storey dwelling house and one of the pairs of semi-detached dwelling houses over separation distances of between 17 and 17.5m. The conventional separation distance of 21.3m applies to suburban situations where two-storey dwelling houses correspond. The situation here would be analogous. Section 10 of the Urban Design Manual advises that, while minimum separation distances are not critical, in their absence, other measures need to be employed to safeguard neighbour privacy. In the present case, judicious tree planting would have a role to play in providing screening. Such planting should be incorporated in any comprehensive landscaping scheme for the site.

7.14. How the shared open space would be managed in the future has not been addressed at the application stage. If the proposed on-site means of access were to be taken in charge, then some of this space, which would adjoin this access, could, presumably, be taken in charge, too. The proposed footpath that would run through the shared open space on the eastern side of the site would duplicate the adjacent

public footpath to The Oaks housing estate, and so the need for it is not self-evident. Condition 5 attached to the PA's permission signals a concern over the informal surveillance of this portion of the shared open space. I recognise this concern and, more widely, concerns over the utility/amenity value of the shared communal space, and the lack of information over its future management.

- 7.15. Condition 6 attached to the PA's permission requires a buffer zone between the single storey dwelling houses and the public footpath. On the submitted revised site layout, such a zone appears to be shown adjoining a footpath within the north-western roadside boundary of the site. The notation signals that these items would be distinguished by their surface materials. The specification of a light metalwork post and rail fence would ensure that the respective private and communal areas are kept separate. If the Board is minded to grant, then this could be conditioned.
- 7.16. I conclude that, while the proposal could be improved quantitatively and qualitatively on the basis of minor amendments, questions remain over the utility/amenity value of the proposed shared open space and its future management.

(iv) Visual and residential amenities

- 7.17. As originally submitted, the proposal would have raised visual and residential amenity concerns. With respect to the former, the recessed siting of the townhouses and apartments in relation to Turlough Road would have failed to reflect the streetscape pattern of frontage development. With respect to the latter, the elongated form of the two-storey apartment building would have corresponded unduly with the nearest rear garden to the south-west with adverse implications for its lighting and sense of enclosure.
- 7.18. As revised, the proposal would overcome the streetscape concern. The two single storey dwelling houses would be sited in positions whereby their front elevations would reflect the front building line of the existing dwelling houses to the south-west, which present as being single storey, too. These dwelling houses would have a projecting gabled element on their front elevations, which would be finished in stone. Each of their gables would be fully hipped.
- 7.19. The two-storey dwelling houses would have two-storey bay window features on their front elevations, which would be finished in stone under a parapet edged flat roof. The main roofs to these dwelling houses would be double pitched with straight

gables. Under Condition 5 attached to the PA's permission, hipped gables would be required, in the interest of visual amenity.

- 7.20. I am not persuaded of the need for Condition 5. During my site visit, I observed that the detached dwelling houses on The Oaks housing estate have half-hipped gables to their roof ends, and, elsewhere, on Turlough Road there are examples of fully hipped roof ends to two-storey dwelling houses. As already noted under the second heading of my assessment, that portion of the site upon which the two-storey dwelling houses would be sited does not relate strongly architecturally to either Turlough Road or The Oaks housing estate. Furthermore, the rectangular form of the two-storey bay feature invites straight rather than hipped gables.
- 7.21. Appellants (a) and (b) express concern that the proposal would adversely affect the amenities of the residential properties, which adjoin the south-eastern boundary of the site, i.e., Nos. 12, 13 & 14 The Oaks housing estate. No. 12 lies beside a bend in the estate road, which laps around its front and exposed side boundaries. Appellants (b) express the concern that their property would thus be encircled by the introduction of the proposed on-site access, which would be to its rear. Consequently, they anticipate noise and intrusion. Collectively, Nos. 12, 13 & 14 anticipate issues with safety, privacy, security, pollution, and noise.
- 7.22. During my site visit, I observed the vacant and overgrown condition of the site, and the presence on it of structures in need of attention/management. I also observed the ease with which it can be accessed from Turlough Road. Accordingly, it presently poses safety and security issues, which I anticipate would ease under the proposal's operational phase. Insofar as they would arise during any construction phase, they would be capable of being addressed by a construction management plan, as would issues of pollution and noise.
- 7.23. The relationships that would arise between these three existing residential properties and the proposed two-storey dwelling houses would be shaped by their respective orientations and separation distances. Essentially, these dwelling houses would not directly correspond, i.e., they would be offset in relation to one another. The proposed dwelling houses would lie from the north north-west around to the west of the existing dwelling houses at distances of at least 20.8m away from the nearest existing dwelling houses, and actual lines of sight would be influenced by

considerable mature vegetation in the existing rear gardens. Given these factors, I consider that the proposal would be compatible with the lighting and privacy of these existing residential properties.

- 7.24. The relationship between the proposed two-storey dwelling house denoted as B-3 and the nearest existing residential property to the north-west on Turlough Road would be somewhat tight insofar as first floor habitable room windows would correspond over a distance of 17.8m on a mild diagonal. Within this dimension there would also be some scope for overlooking the existing rear garden. Again, judicious tree planting would provide the necessary screening, and it could be incorporated in any comprehensive landscaping scheme for the site.
- 7.25. I conclude that the proposal would be compatible with the visual and residential amenities of the area.

(v) Traffic, access, and parking

- 7.26. As originally submitted, the site would have been accessed solely from Turlough Road at a point opposite Sheridan's Lane. The PA considered that this juxtaposition of access points would lead to conflicting vehicular movements, and so, under further information, the applicant revised the access arrangements for the site to show a vehicular access from the initial portion of The Oaks estate road only. Pedestrian access would continue to be from Turlough Road via a footpath through the site.
- 7.27. The appellants object to the proposed access point from the estate road. They do so on the grounds that it would be sited too close to the existing bend in the estate road to the south-east, and so visibility would be inadequate. They emphasize that this estate road serves 80 dwelling houses, and so the traffic generated thereby is considerable. Appellants (b) indicate that the south-eastern sightline from the proposed access point would be restricted by vegetation that overhangs the footpath, and they suggest that this access point should be resited further to the north. Appellant (a) draws attention to the oak tree that would be removed to facilitate the proposed access point, and both appellants draw attention to the extent of pedestrian and cyclist activity on the estate road.
- 7.28. During my site visit, I observed that the estate road is the subject of a 30 kmph speed limit. Under Table 4.2 of DMURS the forward visibility that should be available

at junctions on this estate road is 23m. Similarly, sightlines should have x and y dimensions of 2.4m and 23m. These would be available at the proposed access point and so it would be DMURS compliant.

- 7.29. During my site visit, I also observed the oak trees that line either side of the initial portion of the estate road. They contribute to visual amenity. I observed, too, that, while they parallel one another to begin with, the line of trees extends further to the south on the western side than on the eastern side. The oak tree that would be removed to facilitate the proposed access point is the southernmost on the west side, and so it is not paralleled by one on the east side. To that extent, its loss would not be as aesthetically significant as it might be elsewhere in its host line of trees.
- 7.30. At the entrance to The Oaks housing estate, there is a bank of Lime Bikes stands. To the south-west of this entrance, on Turlough Road, a zebra crossing has been installed, and on either side of this Road cycle lanes have been marked out. These improved pedestrian and cyclist facilities are consistent with appellant (a)'s contention that increased pedestrian and cyclist activity is occurring in the locality.
- 7.31. Appellant (a) draws attention to Condition 20 attached to the PA's permission, which specifies that the proposed on-site access road shall have a carriageway width of 6m with accompanying 2m-wide footpaths on either side. Under Figure 4.55 of DMURS, such specification would be excessive. Instead, a 4.8m-wide shared surface would be appropriate for this access road, rather than the 4m-wide one shown on the revised site layout plan.
- 7.32. Turning to proposed car parking provision, under the revised proposal, the 2 no. dwelling houses beside Turlough Road would be served by a row of 4 no. parallel car parking spaces, which would be laid out in front of these dwelling houses, where the public footpath runs at present. The 5 no. dwelling houses in the main body of the site would be served by a mixture of 9 no. parallel and perpendicular car parking spaces, which would be grouped around the proposed on-site access road. Under the CDP's car parking standards, two-bed and three-bed dwelling houses should be accompanied by 1 no. and 2 no. residents' spaces respectively, and each dwelling should be accompanied by 1 no. visitor space. *Prima facie* 15 no. spaces would be required, whereas 9 no. would be provided.

- 7.33. I recognise that the two-storey dwelling houses have been presented as two-bed rather than three-bed units. However, in the light of my discussion under the third heading of my assessment, they would be capable of being used as three-bed accommodation, and to condition otherwise would be difficult, in practise, to enforce.
- 7.34. I recognise, too, that the objective of seeing infill sites such as the current one developed to a reasonably high density may mean that the full application of CDP car parking standards is unrealistic. In this respect, the relative proximity of Castlebar town centre and the increasing popularity of walking and cycling are all relevant factors.
- 7.35. With respect to the proposed 4 no. space lay-by, I note that it would be only 23m away from the site entrance. As Turlough Road is the subject of a 50 kmph speed limit, under Table 4.2 of DMURS, the relevant y distance is 45m, and so the proposed 4 no. space lay-by would, when in use, obstruct the required south-westerly sightline. Accordingly, these spaces would be incompatible with road safety. Their omission would reduce the proposed parking provision to 9 no. spaces, which I consider would be too low for the proposal. Likewise, their resiting alongside the proposed 9 no. spaces would cause them to be remote from the dwelling houses, which they would serve. Furthermore, it is not self-evident that such resiting would be successful from either practical or aesthetic perspectives.
- 7.36. In the light of the above considerations, I conclude that, while the proposed access point under the revised site layout would be DMURS compliant, the proposed on-site access road and car parking arrangements for the site have not been sufficiently resolved. Specifically, the 4 no. space lay-by would be unacceptable, and its omission would require compensatory car parking spaces to be found elsewhere on the site.

(vi) Water

- 7.37. The proposal would be served by the public water mains and the public foul and stormwater sewerage system.
- 7.38. Under the OPW's flood maps, the site is not shown as being the subject of any identified flood risk.
- 7.39. The submitted site layout plan (drawing no. P-01 dated Nov. 22) specifies a soakaway for installation in the proposed shared open space in the south-eastern

corner of the site. Beyond this soakaway, no other SuDS facilities are shown, and so a comprehensive surface water drainage scheme for the site is needed. Condition 9 attached to the PA's permission requires the provision of such a scheme. I am concerned that optimum SuDS facilities may be difficult to achieve on the basis of the revised site layout.

7.40. I conclude that, as SuDS facilities would be effectively retrofitted into the site layout, the opportunity to realise optimal facilities would be denied under the current proposal.

(vii) Appropriate Assessment

7.41. The site lies neither in nor beside a European site. It is a suburban one within an area that is fully serviced. I am not aware of any capacity issues with the local sewerage system, and I am not aware of any other source/pathway/receptor route between the site and the nearest European site, River Moy SAC, or any other European sites. Accordingly, under the proposal, no appropriate assessment issues would arise.

7.42. Having regard to the nature, scale, and location of the proposal, the nature of the receiving environment, and proximity to the nearest European site, it is concluded that no appropriate assessment issues arise as the proposal would not be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

8.0 Recommendation

That permission be refused.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to:

- The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas Guidelines,
- The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets,
- The Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, and
- The Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008 – 2014,

It is considered that the proposal, as revised, would be of insufficient density for its suburban location, and so it would conflict with national and local planning objectives, which seek to raise residential densities on infill sites in such locations.

The proposed site layout would entail the provision of shared open space, on-site access arrangements, car parking spaces, and surface water drainage arrangements, which have been insufficiently resolved to ensure their efficacy, utility, and amenity value.

Furthermore, the proposed layby for four car parking spaces would encroach upon the south-western sightline at the adjacent junction between Turlough Road and The Oaks housing estate road, and so it would jeopardise road safety.

The proposal would, therefore, 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.

Hugh D. Morrison
Planning Inspector

30th August 2023