



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-319356-24

Development	Construction of 25 houses.
Location	Barry More Townland, Kiltoom, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.
Planning Authority	Roscommon County Council.
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2460008.
Applicant(s)	Aidan Kelly.
Type of Application	Outline Planning Permission.
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Outline Planning Permission.
Type of Appeal	First Party versus decision.
Appellant(s)	Aidan Kelly.
Observer(s)	None.
Date of Site Inspection	4 November 2024.
Inspector	Stephen Rhys Thomas.

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located 7km northwest of Athlone, in the area of Barrymore, in south County Roscommon, close to the western shore of Lough Ree. The area is characterised by a number of houses built along local roads and low density housing estates. Lough Ree is located approximately 500 metres to the east and the Hodson Bay Hotel, located on the shore of Lough Ree, is situated 3 kilometres to the north-east of the site. The Dublin to Castlebar rail line is located to the west, with a signalised level crossing on the L-2021, 180 metres to the west.
- 1.2. The site has a stated area of 5.947 Hectares, and is accessed from a local road the L-2021, via a major junction from the N61 further to the west. The site has an extensive road frontage along the L2021. The site is made up of open fields with undulating topography, with mature trees/hedgerows along the southern, western and eastern boundaries. The entrance to the southern portion of the site comprises an agricultural gateway and a gravelled access route part of the way into the field. There is evidence of spoil on the land in this southern portion. The western boundary comprises the rear gardens of a row of detached bungalows within a cul-de-sac off the L-2021, a small housing estate of 17 dwellings, known as Woodlands. Another field gateway entrance to the site can be found in this estate. The south eastern part of the site is bound by an existing bungalow with block wall and the remainder of the eastern boundary is to agricultural fields.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposal is for Outline Permission to construct 25 two storey detached dwellings on a site of 5.947 Hectares, the detail is as follows:
- 25 four bedroom detached two storey houses.
 - Single cul-de-sac access road
 - New footpath to southern roadside boundary
 - 50 car parking spaces
 - Central open space

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

3.1.1. The planning authority refused permission for three reasons, as follows:

1. The proposed development by reason of the overall indicative design concept and layout and the number of units proposed would fail to accord with the provisions of the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy set out in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 which does not provide for a scale of development of this nature on unzoned land within the Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan boundary. The development if permitted would be contrary to the provisions of the Hodson Bay/ Barrymore Area Plan which seeks to consolidate opportunities for low density development in a pattern consistent with the character of the area and as an attractive alternative to single dwellings in the wider rural area. Furthermore, the scale of development proposed would result in a disproportionate level of residential development in this area, relative to all other similarly classified 'serviced villages' and the associated collective growth projections for such 'serviced villages' as set out in the Core Strategy of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028. The proposed development would represent an uncoordinated and unsustainable approach to the residential growth of the area and would militate against the achievement of balanced residential growth throughout the county and would therefore be contrary to the principles of the core strategy as set out in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The proposed development by reason of its indicative design and layout is out of character with the existing pattern of development in the area, which predominantly consists of low density residential development on larger individual plots. The proposed development, therefore fails to satisfactorily integrate with and relate to the wider area and if permitted would result in a form of development which would be inconsistent with the prevailing pattern of development in the area and which would impact unduly on the amenity of future residents and would set an undesirable precedent for other similar inappropriate development. The proposed development

would accordingly be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. In the absence of sufficient information to demonstrate that the minimum required sightlines can be achieved in accordance with the requirements of Section 12.24 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 and in the absence of a Traffic Impact Assessment and Road Safety Audit to demonstrate whether or not the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the capacity, safety or operational efficiency of the national road network, the Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposed development, if permitted, would not have the potential to endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard. The proposed development would accordingly be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The basis of the planning authority decision includes:

- The lands are not zoned for residential development and the proposal for 25 units would take up a significant portion of the core strategy allocation of 90 units for the 22 serviced villages in the settlement hierarchy of the plan. The Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan envisages low density housing development, the proposal is inconsistent with this plan and the character of the area.
- Traffic safety considerations have not been taken in to account and no specific drawings have been submitted to illustrate sightlines. No visitor spaces have been provided.

In accordance with the Planner's recommendation, permission was refused.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Environment Department – further information required.
- Roads Section - further information required.
- Area Engineer - further information required.

- Housing Section – no objections.

3.2.3. Conditions

- Not relevant, permission refused. I note conditions recommended by the other technical departments of the Council.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Uisce Éireann – no objections, wastewater and water connections feasible without upgrades.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) – further information required (TTA and RSA).

3.4. Third Party Observations

3.4.1. None.

4.0 Planning History

4.1. Site

PA Ref 19/593 – Permission for 15 two storey detached houses. Permission expires February 2025.

PA ref 17/480 and ABP-**300988**-18. Permission refused to demolish an agricultural outbuilding, the construction of 21 unit housing development consisting of 7 two storey detached houses, 14 two storey semi-detached houses. The development will be accessed from the existing public road and the proposed development will include estate roads, footpaths, public open space, connection to existing public services and sewers, landscaping and all associated infrastructure works and services. August 2018.

PA ref 11/304 and ABP reference PL20.**240181** – Permission refused for 50 dwellings.

Other planning applications, older than fourteen years are located on this site and set out in the planning authority's report.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

- 5.1.1. The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 has been in effect since April 2022. The plan states that it is set within the framework of Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) at national level, and at regional level by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) (2020) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area. Additionally, it has been prepared to accord with Ministerial Guidelines as issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024 were published after the commencement of the development plan.

Relevant sections of the statutory plan that refer to the subject site include:

Chapter 2 Core Strategy and Settlement Policy

CS 2.2 Implement all land use planning policy and objectives consistent with the Core Strategy, in order to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county, with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns.

CS 2.16 Ensure that the serviced settlements throughout the county maintain existing population levels and services, and to ensure that future growth is balanced and sustainable and is relative and appropriate to their scale, size and character.

Chapter 3 People, Places and Housing

Chapter 4 Towns and Villages

Chapter 7 Infrastructure, Transport and Communications

Chapter 11 Social, Community and Cultural Development

Chapter 12 Development Management Standards

- 5.1.2. Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 - Volume 2

Chapter 4 Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan

Residential Development - Residential development proposals arising within the settlement boundary of Hodson Bay / Barrymore, should provide access to existing infrastructure i.e. water, sewerage and the existing road network. It is acknowledged that in some instances infrastructural improvements, including footpaths, lighting and other accommodation works may need to be provided to accommodate residential proposals. Residential development proposals within the settlement boundary of Hodson Bay shall preserve existing amenities and have regard to the overall heritage of the area. Multi-unit residential proposals within this zone shall have regard to the need to include private/semi-private/public open spaces as part of the overall development.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.2.1. Lough Ree SAC (site code 000440) and Lough Ree SPA (site code 004064) is located between 400 and 500 metres to the east of the subject site at its closest point.

5.3. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

- 5.3.1. Class (10)(b) of Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) provides that mandatory EIA is required for the following classes of development:
- (i) Construction of more than 500 dwelling units
 - (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 ha in the case of a business district, 10 ha in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 ha elsewhere. (In this paragraph, “business district” means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)
- 5.3.2. It is proposed to seek Outline Planning Permission to construct 25 houses and all associated site works, on a site of 5.947 Hectares. The site is not located within an existing built up area or in a business district. The site area is well below the applicable threshold of 20 hectares and far less than 500 residential units. The introduction of a residential development will not have an adverse impact in environmental terms on surrounding land uses. It is noted that the site is not designated for the protection of the landscape or of natural or cultural heritage and

the proposed development is not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site as discussed in section 8.0 of my report below and there is no evidence on file of a direct hydrological connection present such as would give rise to significant impact on nearby water courses. The proposed development would not give rise to waste, pollution or nuisances that differ from that arising from other housing or commercial development in the area. It would not give rise to a risk of major accidents or risks to human health. The proposed development would use the public water and drainage services of Uisce Éireann (Irish Water) and Roscommon County Council, upon which its effects would be marginal.

5.3.3. Having regard to: -

- The nature and scale of the proposed development, which is significantly under the mandatory threshold in respect of Class 10 - Infrastructure Projects of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended),
- The location of the site on lands entirely within the development boundary of the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan set out in Volume 2 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the results of the strategic environmental assessment of the County Development Plan, undertaken in accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC),
- The location of the site that is served by public infrastructure, and the existing pattern of residential development in the vicinity,
- The guidance set out in the “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development”, issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003).

5.3.4. I have concluded that, by reason of the nature and scale of the housing development and the location of the subject site, the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that on preliminary examination an environmental impact assessment report for the proposed development was not necessary in this case, appendices 1 and 2 of my report refer.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1. The applicant has appealed the planning authority's decision to refuse permission setting out the wider policy background for the future growth of Athlone, the grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The area provides a wide variety of commercial, retail, social and educational facilities. The proximity of the site to Athlone town are not explored at all.
- The residential density of the proposed development is low, at 4 units per hectare, this low density matches that of surrounding development. The current proposal is a reduction in housing number (48) from that discussed at preplanning. The character of the area will not be affected.
- There appears to be little guidance in the statutory plan for the area concerning residential development and the production of a Joint Urban Area Plan (Joint Unitary Plan – RSES objective), CS 2.9 refers. The Hodson area is identified in the statutory plan core strategy map as a rural area under urban influence, but the area is not really urban in character.
- Policy CS 2.4 requires the provision of sufficient zoned land (and serviced) to satisfy housing demand, many villages are not serviced. The appeal site and the wider area are the only lands close to Athlone that are serviced.
- The concept of regeneration can apply to rural areas as well as urban areas.
- The provision of new housing will support recently permitted and existing tourist development nearby. These tourist facilities will use existing roads, where traffic issues were not considered to be a problem. It should be noted that previous applications on this site, did not highlight sightlines as an issue of concern, or that cannot be addressed by design changes.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

None.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. The main issues in this appeal are those raised in the grounds of appeal, and I am satisfied that no other substantive issues arise. The planning authority refused permission for three reasons. In broad terms, it is the lack of residential zoning and density, layout and traffic considerations that form the basis for the planning authority's concerns. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the appeal, the report/s of the local authority, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this appeal to be considered are as follows:

- Principle of Development and Residential Density
- Layout and Design
- Traffic

7.2. Principle of Development and Residential Density

- 7.2.1. Principle of Development - The appeal site is located on lands that are within the plan boundary of the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan, Volume 2 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 refers. The Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan sets out the aims and objectives for the area, with leisure tourism/amenity and green belt as the only land use zonings illustrated. There are no specific housing objectives in this section of the plan, however, good design and the protection of the environment are high level aims set out in policy objective HB 3 of the plan.
- 7.2.2. The planning authority are concerned that the development would not accord with the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy set out in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028. According to the planning authority the development plan does not provide for the scale of development proposed on un-zoned land and that the scheme would be inconsistent with the character of the area. If permitted the development would represent uncoordinated residential growth at odds with core strategy and serviced village growth projections. The applicant disagrees and refers to the need for a coordinated plan for the Athlone area in general and that the proposed development is at a density and design that fits in with its surroundings.

- 7.2.3. In the interests of clarity, the appeal site is located on land that is not zoned for residential development. In addition, even though the lands fall within the development boundary of the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan, there is no clear policy objective backdrop to say with any degree of certainty that large scale residential development such as that proposed should be permitted here. The Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan is a plan that guides tourism and amenity protection rather than framing housing policy, other than the broad aims that require connection to existing infrastructure, provision of footpaths/lighting and the preservation of existing amenities and the overall heritage of the area.
- 7.2.4. At the wider scale and to bring some greater clarity, the core strategy of the county development plan sets out where in the county growth should occur and what areas are under pressure for urban influenced development, map 2.1 of the plan refers. Hodson Bay/Barrymore is identified as a serviced village located within an area under urban influence. As a settlement that is serviced by public water services and has capacity to facilitate a degree of residential demand, growth is recognised but not quantified for each individual settlement, table 2.3: Settlement Hierarchy of the development plan refers. With reference to serviced settlements such as Hodson Bay, it is a policy objective to ensure that such settlements maintain existing population levels and services, ensure that future growth is balanced and sustainable and is relative and appropriate to scale, size and character, CS 2.16 refers. In this respect table 2.2: Core Strategy Allocations, states that 90 new residential units should be allocated across all serviced villages (22 in total) to accommodate a projected population growth of 240 persons. The core strategy was developed to align with the findings of the Council's Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDA) that set out projections for future need over the lifetime of the Plan and beyond to 2031.
- 7.2.5. The proposal to construct 25 houses in the Hodson Bay/Barrymore area would absorb more than a quarter of the planned allocation of new houses envisaged for all 22 serviced settlements. This would lead to the unbalanced residential growth of the county and go against the findings of the HNDA. Ultimately this would not be in the best interests of sustainable, balanced and planned development.
- 7.2.6. The applicant refers to the need for a Joint Urban Area Plan, a term to describe a Local Area Plan that will be prepared jointly by Westmeath and Roscommon County

Councils for the Regional Growth Centre of Athlone, policy objective CS 2.9 refers. Such a plan has yet to be prepared and in its absence only the current statutory plan policy objectives have currency in this appeal. That being the case, the only reference to what quantum of housing is envisaged for the Hodson Bay/Barrymore area is set out in table 2.2: Core Strategy Allocations. If all 22 serviced settlements were divided into the 90 new residential units planned for, each serviced settlement could only be expected to deliver four dwellings over the lifetime of the plan. This may change for the appeal site if a Joint Urban Area Plan is drafted in accordance with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities. However, this is not the case and the proposed development of 25 dwellings fails to align with the core strategy of the development plan.

- 7.2.7. Residential Density – In the first reason for refusal, the planning authority also point out that the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan does not support higher residential densities, and this makes sense in the context of the core strategy. The area has been identified as a serviced settlement and this is confirmed by Uisce Éireann, but from my observations the area does not conform to what could be considered as a village in the conventional sense and the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan acknowledges this fact. Despite this, the development plan has identified the area for low density development and listed it in table 2.2: Core Strategy Allocations of the development plan. The applicant also recognises the unique qualities of the area and that a variety of services and amenities are to be found, albeit in a manner only accessible by car from my observations of the area. I mention all of these points because since the development plan came in to force, the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities were published, and this has some relevance to the appeal site. The Compact Settlements Guidelines recognise that previous guidelines reinforce the national policy objectives of the NPF relating to compact growth and set a framework for a performance-based approach to the consideration of density. In very broad terms the compact settlement guidelines are concerned with lands that are urban in nature, serviced and zoned for residential development. At the lower end of the scale, the guidelines have this to say about rural towns and villages:

Rural Towns and Villages are small in scale with limited infrastructure and services provision. It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that development in rural towns and villages is tailored to the scale, form and character of the settlement and the capacity of services and infrastructure (including public transport and water services infrastructure). Lands zoned for housing at the edge of rural towns and villages at locations that can be integrated into the settlement and are connected to existing walking and cycling networks can offer an effective alternative, including serviced sites, to the provision of single houses in the countryside. The density of development at such locations should respond in a positive way to the established context.

- 7.2.8. Consequently, and because the appeal site can be serviced by the existing wastewater services, some amount of development could be considered here. However, the quantum of development that may be considered should align with the core strategy of the plan and integrate with existing development. I am not satisfied that this is the case and the provision of 25 dwellings would exceed that planned for in the current development plan, and militate against the aims of the Hodson Bay/Barrymore Area Plan that seeks to enhance the surroundings and respect the visually and environmentally sensitivity of the area, policy objective HB 3 refers.

7.3. Layout and Design

- 7.3.1. The second reason for refusal follows on from the issues raised in the first. The planning authority are not satisfied that the proposed layout design would integrate well with existing low density residential development. The applicant states that the proposed design was arrived at in order to match the character of the area and so they disagree with the planning authority's reason on this occasion.
- 7.3.2. The area in the vicinity of the appeal site is characterised by one off rural housing spread out along the public road. A more formal housing estate type layout can be found to the east at Cluain Rí and to the west at Woodlands. However, the detached houses in both of these estates are randomly set out on very large garden sites, unlike that proposed by the applicant which is a more regular and geometric approach. From my observations of the site, I noticed a number of slopes, depressions and raised areas, the site is not universally level and it is difficult to tell what relationship the proposed houses will have to neighbouring property.

Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain with certainty if residential amenities will be impacted upon or not. I note the planning history of the site and specifically previous applications refused by the Board, section 4.0 of my report refers. However, I also note that permission was granted by the planning authority for 15 houses on a layout that broadly resembles the design cues of the current appeal, PA reference 19/593 refers. This planning permission is yet to wither and can still be implemented.

- 7.3.3. In terms of the design approach employed by the applicant, I can see that a very low density of development is aimed for and achieved. Unlike the more randomised approach to the placement of houses in neighbouring areas, the applicant has opted for a uniform layout with large houses on gardens fronting onto the cul-de-sac access road with a very large open space at the centre. At a very broad level, there is only a very subtle difference between the appeal site and neighbouring layouts, and I am not as concerned about this aspect of the proposal as the planning authority. I am not satisfied that the proposed development is significantly different from the character of adjacent estates to warrant a refusal of permission on layout and design grounds. In that respect, I note the planning history of the site and the layouts previously proposed, and I am satisfied that this iteration is closer to that envisaged by the low density aspirations that the planning authority have for the area.

7.4. Traffic

- 7.4.1. The planning authority raise issues about traffic safety and the availability of sightlines at the vehicular entrance to the site. In addition, the lack of a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is highlighted and this means that impacts on the capacity, safety or operational efficiency of the national road network cannot be assessed. The applicant points to existing and permitted tourism development in the area and that these all avail of the local road network without traffic concerns. Also, previous planning applications on the site, did not highlight sightlines as an issue of concern, or that cannot be addressed by design changes.
- 7.4.2. The planning history and context of the site is important to consider in this appeal. The applicant proposes a new vehicular entrance at a location 30 metres east of that already permitted for 15 dwellings, PA reference PD/19/593 refers. This full planning permission for housing on the site is not constrained by any conditions that require

vehicular entrance redesign and I note that internal reports on this application raised no issues about sightlines, capacity, safety or operational efficiency of the national road network. That being the case, I see no reason why the proposed entrance or a derivative of the same with the benefit of a sightlines drawing cannot address the issues raised by the planning authority. In addition, the provision of a TIA could be prepared to address the issues raised by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. However, I am satisfied that the matter of traffic hazard could have been addressed by the preparation of appropriate documentation submitted by way of further information to the planning authority, it was not.

- 7.4.3. In any case, I do not anticipate that the development would pose a traffic hazard, the planning history of the site demonstrates this point and permission could be considered, provided that any new entrance aligns with that already permitted. The matter of vehicular entrance redesign could be addressed by condition to be considered at the 'Permission Consequent on Outline Permission' stage of the development process. I am satisfied that the proposed development will not impact significantly on the local road network in terms of traffic generation and will not result in a traffic hazard.

8.0 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

- 8.1. I note that the planning authority has issued a screening opinion, and a NIS has not been sought. The planning authority concluded that given the proximity of the site to designated sites, a screening assessment was required but that impacts would not be likely to result in significant effects to those sites identified. The applicant did not submit an appropriate assessment screening document with the application or any other ecological or natural environment documentation. I note that the issue of AA was previously addressed on the site under previous plans for the lands and previous planning applications. AA issues did not arise as an area of concern. Nevertheless, an AA screening determination is necessary in this instance.
- 8.2. Compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to screening the need for appropriate assessment of a project under Part XAB, section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section.

8.3. Having reviewed the documents on the file, it is difficult to conclude that the information allows for an examination and identification of any potential significant effects of the development, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on European sites. The proposal is for outline permission for 25 houses across a site of 5.947 Hectares. If permitted, a further application for permission consequent on a grant of outline permission would be required. The current appeal alone would not provide consent to develop the lands. However, impacts on designated sites must be identified and assessed, I note the planning authority's AA report, but I have no other information on file to consider potential pathways and impacts, or assess the significance of potential impacts.

8.4. The appeal site is located between 400 and 500 metres south west of the Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA. The planning authority's appropriate assessment screening report provides a description of the proposed development, identifies European Sites within a possible zone of influence of the development, identifies potential pathways and impacts, and assesses the significance of potential impacts. The screening report concluded that no significant effects are expected on the qualifying interest or conservation objectives of the Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA and a Natura Impact Statement is not required. I have had regard to this screening report and my assessment follows.

8.5. Screening for Appropriate Assessment – Test of likely significant effects

The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site and therefore it needs to be determined if the development is likely to have significant effects on a European Site. The proposed development is examined in relation to any possible interaction with European sites designated Special Conservation Areas SACs and Special Protection Areas SPAs to assess whether it may give rise to significant effects on any European site.

8.6. Description of Development

In summary, the proposal comprises the construction of 25 house on a site 5.947 Hectares, connection to the municipal water services system and all associated site works. Taking account of the characteristics of the proposed development in terms of its location and the scale of works, the following issues are considered for examination in terms of implications for likely significant effects on European sites:

- Construction related – uncontrolled surface water silt / construction related pollution.
- Habitat loss / fragmentation
- Habitat disturbance / species disturbance (construction and or operational)

8.7. Submissions and observations.

The planning authority's AA screening report is noted, no other submissions present on file.

8.8. European Sites

The development site is located between 400 and 500 metres south west of the Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA. A number of other European sites occur within 15km of the site within a possible zone of influence, however in the absence of direct source-pathway-receptor links and given the distances involved, I do not consider the proposed development will have a direct or indirect effect on other SACs/SPAs in the area.

8.9. Identification of Likely Effects

The site of the proposed development comprises a large greenfield site of over 5 Hectares. It appears that the proposed development is not connected with or necessary for the conservation management of any Natura 2000 site, though this is difficult to ascertain with certainty. The range of activities arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development that would possibly have any potential effects on European sites would relate to pollution of surface water due to household sewage and wastewaters including during construction activities. However, given the large expanse of open grassland and the proximity to an SPA, species disturbance and habitat loss / fragmentation during construction and operation may be an issue to consider. The objective for Lough Ree SPA is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA. The features of interest of Lough Ree SPA are: Little Grebe, Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Coot, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Common Tern, and the habitat which supports them Wetland and Waterbirds. Whether this site is an ex-situ feeding ground for species associated with the Lough Ree SPA cannot be

determined, because there is no species survey on the file. As regards In-combination effects I cannot be certain that there are no known development projects or plans with which significant in-combination effects would arise, this information is not on the file and this matter is not referenced in detail in the planning authority's assessment.

8.10. Mitigation Measures

No measures designed or intended to avoid or reduce any harmful effects of the proposed development on a European site have been referred to in any of the documentation on file.

8.11. Screening Determination

The proposed development has been considered in light of the requirements of Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. Having carried out Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the project, it is concluded that there is no likelihood of significant effects to those sites listed at table 1 of the planning authority's screening assessment and within the possible zone of influence. The potential for significant effects to European Sites Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA, however, cannot be excluded due to proximity, species disturbance, possible surface and groundwater connectivity. As the project individually or in combination with other plans or projects would be likely to give rise to significant effects on Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA in view of their Conservation Objectives, Appropriate Assessment is therefore required.

This determination is based on the following:

- The nature and extent of the proposed development, with emphasis placed on surface water discharges and disturbance to species associated with a designated site, ex-situ feeding grounds,
- The proximity to European sites, and
- The potential for pathways between the site and the European sites.

On the basis of the limited information provided with the application and appeal and in the absence of an AA Screening Report or Natura Impact Statement the Board cannot be satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on Lough Ree

SAC and Lough Ree SPA or any other European site, in view of the site's conservation objectives. In such circumstances the Board is precluded from granting permission.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. I recommend that outline planning permission should be refused for the reasons and considerations as set out below.

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. The site is located on lands that are not zoned for residential development within the Hodson Bay / Barrymore Area Plan boundary, Volume 2 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028. The provision of 25 dwelling units would not align with the provisions of the Core Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy set out in table 2.2: Core Strategy Allocations in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028, or align with policy objective CS 2.2 that seeks consistency with the Core Strategy. The proposed development would represent an uncoordinated and unsustainable approach to the residential growth of the area and would militate against the achievement of balanced residential growth throughout the county and would therefore be contrary to the principles of the core strategy as set out in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. On the basis of the information provided with the application and appeal and in the absence of a Natura Impact Statement, the Board cannot be satisfied that the proposed development individually, or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have significant effect on the Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA, or any other European site, in view of the site's conservation objectives. In such circumstances the Board is precluded from granting permission.

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.

Stephen Rhys Thomas
Senior Planning Inspector

5 December 2024

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ABP-319356-24		
Proposed Development Summary	Outline Planning Permission is sought to construct 25 houses and all associated works, on a site of 5.947 Hectares.		
Development Address	Barry More Townland, Kiltoom, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.		
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)		Yes	✓
		No	
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			
No	✓		Proceed 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 (if relevant)
No	✓		No EIAR required
Yes	✓	10. Infrastructure projects,	Outline Planning Permission is sought for Urban

		(b)(i) Construction of more than 500 dwelling units. And (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.	development comprising 25 houses and all associated site works, on a site of 5.947 Hectares.	
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4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?		
No	✓	Preliminary Examination required Appendix 2 refers.
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

Form 2

EIA - Preliminary Examination

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference Number	ABP-319356-24
Proposed Development Summary	Outline Planning Permission is sought for 25 houses and all associated works, on a site of 5.947 Hectares.
Development Address	Barry More Townland, Kiltoom, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.
The Board carried 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. This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development	The size, design, cumulation with existing/proposed development is not significant. The use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health are considered to be minimal.
Location of development	The land use would integrate satisfactorily with the area, that is characterised by very low density residential development. There is an abundance of natural resources, and the absorption capacity of the natural

			environment in the vicinity is high. European sites are located nearby and these are assessed in detail under section 8.0 of the main report. There are no densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance in the vicinity.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts			There are no significant effects identified in relation to environmental parameters, in terms of magnitude and spatial extent and the nature of impacts. There are no transboundary issues. The development is not of an intensity or complexity, that would result in significant, cumulative effects or limit opportunities for mitigation.
Conclusion			
Likelihood of Significant Effects			No
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.		✓

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

DP/ADP: _____ Date: _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)