



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-320496-24

Development	<i>For minor revisions to the front elevation of the existing dwelling house. The development will consist of a recess to the upper level/apex of the existing gable fronted projection to provide for a balcony.</i>		
Location	<i>Lorras Beag Thoir, Errisbeg East, Roundstone, Co. Galway, H91 VYA9.</i>		
Planning Authority Ref.	<i>2460629.</i>		
Applicant(s)	<i>David Jameson.</i>		
Type of Application	<i>Permission.</i>	PA Decision	<i>Refuse.</i>
Type of Appeal	<i>First Party</i>	Appellant	<i>David Jameson</i>
Observer(s)	<i>None</i>		
Date of Site Inspection	<i>07-11-2024</i>	Inspector	<i>Adam Kearney</i>

Context

1. Site Location/ and Description

The subject site is located in the townland of Errisbeag East, in a coastal area of West County Galway approximately 2 km southwest of Roundstone village and 65km west of Galway City. The subject property (identified as '*Errisbeg Cottage*') is a single storey dwelling with attic accommodation. It is a 'one off' dwelling accessed from and elevated above the Regional Road (R-341). There are existing single storey dwellings in proximity, one to the east at a similar elevation and another to the south on the opposite side of the road at a reduced level below the road. Within 0.5km southwest of the dwelling is 'Dogs Bay' beach with an associated mobile home park.

2. Description of development.

The proposal seeks revisions to the front elevation of the existing dwelling house. The development will consist of a recess to the upper level/apex of the existing gable fronted projection, to provide for a balcony.

3. Planning History

Ref. 18/1890: permission **Granted** for a sewage treatment system and polishing filter with all associated works to replace existing system

Ref. 14/1329 retention of dwellinghouse as constructed, on revised site boundaries, and for extension to same dwellinghouse (gross floor space 240sqm)

Withdrawn following a FI request which sought information about the wastewater treatment and the suspected residential use of the outbuilding

Ref. 96/2029: permission **Granted** to D. Jameson for dwelling house (change of house plan).

4. National/Regional/Local Planning Policy

- *The Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 is the relevant plan for the area.*

Objective LCM 1 – Preservation of Landscape Character

Preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation and enhancement, where possible of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.

Objective LCM 2 – Landscape Sensitivity Classification

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.

8.13.3 Protected Views and Scenic Routes

Viewpoint Angle Reference 8'. Map 8.4 of the CDP

DM Standard 4: House Extensions (Urban and Rural)

In general, be subordinate to the existing dwelling in its size, unless in exceptional cases, a larger extension compliments the existing dwelling in its design and massing;

- reflect the window proportions, detailing and finishes, texture, materials and colour unless a high quality contemporary and innovatively designed extension
- not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties through undue overlooking, undue overshadowing and/or an over dominant visual impact; and
- carefully consider site coverage to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space.

5. Natural Heritage Designations

- Dog's Bay SAC 0.1km
- Connemara Bog Complex SAC 0.6km
- Cregduff Lough SAC 0.8km

Development, Decision and Grounds of Appeal

6. PA Decision

Refuse Permission for the reason stated

Having regard to visual sensitivity of the subject site, located within a Special Landscape Sensitivity, within a Viewpoint Angle Reference 8 and noting the siting context and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that if permitted as proposed the development would not effectively assimilate into this sensitive rural setting. It is considered that the proposed revisions to the front elevation including a balcony would constitute an obtrusive feature and would be visually incongruous, would result in a built form that would not fit appropriately or integrate effectively into this rural location, would contravene materially Policy Objectives LCM 2 and LCM 3, and DM Standard 4 in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. Accordingly, to grant the proposal would interfere with the character of the landscape, would detract from the visual amenity of the area, would militate against the preservation of the rural environment, would materially contravene an objective and a development management standard contained in the current county development plan, would set an undesirable precedent for similar future development in the area, and therefore, would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

7. First Party Appeal. *Grounds:*

- The existing house is located at a higher level to the local road and is in keeping with the pattern of one-off houses which overlook the coastal landscape to the south
- Is located on the landward side of the road

- Class 3 - *Special* Landscape Sensitivity area is broad and covers most of Connemara
- existing dwellinghouse was permitted and constructed prior to the adoption of this 'Special Landscape Sensitivity' designation
- will not alter the external appearance of the house or increase the overall height
- site is not located within the protected "viewpoint angle reference 8'. Map 8.4 of the CDP
- a description of View Ref 8 states that 'The focus of this view is the coastal waters. The adjacent graveyard, Inishlackan and Cnoc Mordain are important features of this view
- submit that View Ref. 8 is not applicable to the consideration of this case.
- Points to a balcony located 1.6km from subject site and suggests that this supports the argument that a balcony is not inconsistent with the established pattern of development in the area
- in an effort to provide for a higher quality design intervention at this location, the applicant commissioned the preparation of a revised balcony design that accompanies the appeal
- proffers that new design is a 'neater' approach and is the preferred design solution
- provides a CGI photomontage of the proposed balcony

8. PA Response

- None

Environmental Screening

9. EIA Screening

Having regard to the nature and scale of the development, which is for the extension of a residential property in a rural area, it is not considered that it falls within the classes listed in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), and as such preliminary

examination or an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. See Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening included with this report.

10. AA Screening

I have considered the proposal in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The subject site is located circa 100m from the nearest European Site (Dogs Bay SAC (Site code 001257)).

The proposed development comprises revisions to the front elevation of the existing dwelling house and will consist of a recess to the upper level/apex of the existing gable fronted projection, to provide for a balcony. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the planning appeal.

Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows;

- The small scale and nature of the development
- The distance from the nearest European site and absence of any identifiable hydrological or ecological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and the SAC
- The presence of Intervening physical barriers in the form of stone walls and public road between the subject site and the SAC
- And taking into account the screening report submitted with the application

I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Likely significant effects are excluded and therefore Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

2.0 **Assessment**

2.1. It is considered that the main issues arising from the appeal relate to the potential impact of the proposal on the visual amenity of the area in terms of views and prospects and more specifically upon protected "viewpoint angle reference 8' of the CDP and also a revised design submitted with the appeal and how this is measured against Development Management Standard 4

2.2. **Visual Amenity**

The site is located within a Landscape Sensitive Area Class 3 on a 'Maritime Scenic Route', wherein the development plan through Objective LCM 1 requires development proposals to be designed sympathetic to the landscape, be located on sites that do not negatively impact on the landscape character and must not be unduly obtrusive in their siting and design. LCM 2 requires the Local Authority to have regard to the Landscape classification which they have ascertained as Class 3. It is considered that the siting of the existing dwelling on an elevated site overlooking an established scenic route necessitates the need to integrate any further development on this prominent site into the landscape.

The site is set back from the road and is on the northern side with panoramic scenic views along the coastline. However, the site is elevated and prominent and rugged limestone hilly terrain provides an equally enticing visual backdrop. Any alteration/extensions in particular to prominent and elevated properties necessitates a sympathetic approach given the landscape sensitivity.

Having visited the site and travelled the route from Roundstone to Clifden the large number of dwellings constructed along this route is noteworthy. The proposed modification, while in terms of a change to the footprint and scale of development could be considered minor, when considered in the context of the wider Connemara area and the sensitive maritime route the potential for impact and precedent is undeniable and provides some of the reasoning behind policy objectives LCM 1 and LCM 2 in the first instance.

I am satisfied that the proposed modification to the existing dwelling would serve to militate against the established built form and character of the rural area and would

introduce an incongruous and obtrusive component and further negate the already significant impact of overdevelopment along this scenic and sensitive route.

2.3. Revised Design

I note in the appeal documentation the agent for the applicant/appellant refers to a revised design that provides for a neater and more symmetrical design and they have enclosed revised drawings and a CGI photo montage of the proposed revised design.

The proposed changes as I see it are negligible and I do not understand the rationale behind the submission of the revisions, however I do note the floor area of the proposed balcony has actually increased from 7.5m² to 8.4m².

The revised design accompanying the appeal does not alter the overall thrust of the visual impact of the proposal. The provision of a balcony by modifying a gable projection will result in a discordant elevational change and a departure from the existing established rural character and pattern of development in the area.

In addition, the dwelling is positioned in close proximity to the dwelling to the east and DM Standard 4 requires that any extension or modification should not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties through undue overlooking, undue overshadowing and/or an over dominant visual impact.

I am satisfied that the balcony and use of same at a first-floor level in the context proposed would undoubtedly enable overlooking and a loss of privacy for the property to the east specifically the open areas to the front and side.

2.4. Viewpoint Angle Reference 8

I note the Local Authority in their reasons for refusal have cited Viewpoint Reference 8 as illustrated in map 8.4 of the CDP. I have viewed the map and online viewer. The descriptor incorporates the coastal view, the graveyard, Inishlackan and Cnoc Mordain. I also visited the approximate location of the viewpoint during my visit and albeit I understand that the property is on the periphery of the viewing angle in a 2D perspective, in real terms the property is not visible to the human eye at the viewpoint and irrespective of whether it was visible I am satisfied that given the

distance offset (c.0.6km) any alterations to an existing dwelling as proposed would not be discernible.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1. I recommend that permission for the development be Refused.

4.0 Reasons & Considerations

4.1. Having regard to policy objectives LCM 1 and LCM 2 DM standard 4 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and by reason of the design, potential for overlooking and location of the proposed modification on a substantially elevated coastal site and having regard to the sensitivity of the site in a category 3 special coastal landscape. The proposal would represent an inappropriate development and would result in a built form that would not integrate effectively into this rural location. The development proposed by reason of its prominence and deviation from the established fenestration pattern and materials used in the alterations to the front façade, would result in an obtrusive feature in the landscape at this location, which would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and would fail to be adequately absorbed and integrated into the landscape. The development proposed would, therefore, fails to comply with the provisions of the Development Plan, contravenes objectives LCM 1 and LCM 2 and Development Management Standard 4 and would set an undesirable precedent for other such development in the vicinity and 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.

Name: Adam Kearney

Planning Inspector

Date: 11-11-2024

Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ABP-320496-24		
Proposed Development Summary	For minor revisions to the front elevation of the existing dwelling house. The development will consist of a recess to the upper level/apex of the existing gable fronted projection to provide for a balcony		
Development Address	Lorras Beag Thoir, Errisbeg East, Roundstone, Co. Galway, H91 VYA9		
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	X
		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)?			
Yes	Tick/or leave blank	State the Class here.	Proceed to Q3.
No	X		No further action required
3. Does the proposed development equal or exceed any relevant THRESHOLD set out in the relevant Class?			
Yes			EIA Mandatory EIAR required

No	X	N/A	Proceed to Q4
4. Is the proposed development below the relevant threshold for the Class of development [sub-threshold development]?			
Yes			

5. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?		
No		Screening determination remains as above (Q1 to Q4)
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _____