



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-321883-25

Development	Demolition of dwelling and construction of dwelling and associated site works.
Location	Tully, Strandhill, Sligo, F91 FE02
Planning Authority	Sligo County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2460432
Applicants	Frank and Imelda Boyle
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellants	Frank and Imelda Boyle
Observers	None
Date of Site Inspection	23 rd April 2025
Inspector	Jim Egan

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site, with a stated area of c. 0.611ha, is located along the Coolera Peninsula, on the southern side of the R292 in the townland of Tully, approximately 500m east of Strandhill village and approximately 4km west of Sligo town.
- 1.2. The R292, which is part of the Wild Atlantic Way, comprises cycle tracks on both sides, along with a relatively deep grass verge (c. 14m) on its southern side, which incorporates a walking track along its inner boundary.
- 1.3. The site comprises a vacant split-level, two-storey dwelling, accessed from the R292 via a graded meandering driveway. The site is located on a steep hill, sloping downwards from south to north, consistent with the local topography, which falls towards Sligo Bay to the north. The land level on the southern boundary is c. +117m compared to the northern boundary with the R292 at c. +80m, equating to fall of c. 37m. The finished ground floor level of the existing dwelling is stated to be +95.03, equating to a level change of c. 15m to the northern / front boundary.
- 1.4. The existing dwelling is set back c. 30m from the northern boundary with the R292. The land within the front setback slopes down dramatically to the front boundary, with this land comprising a woodland including sycamore, ash, goat willow, silver birch and leylandii. The eastern boundary at the interface to the dwelling comprises a row of mature leylandiis and a hawthorn hedge, while the western boundary, again at the interface with the dwelling, comprises a cluster of trees including goat willow and cypress.
- 1.5. To the west of the site the aforementioned woodland continues for c. 400m west / southwest towards Strandhill. To the east of the site, on the southern side of the R292, there is a paddock of gorse and grass, followed by linear rural housing, which generally continues towards Sligo town. To the north of the site is the R292, and further north is woodland and farmland running towards Sligo Bay with intermittent rural dwellings accessed off a local road. To the south of the site is agricultural grassland.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing split-level, two-storey, detached dwelling (c. 210sq.m) and construction of a split-level, two-storey, four-

bedroom, detached dwelling, along with a detached single-storey flat-roofed garage located to the rear / south of the dwelling. The total floor area is stated as being c. 470sq.m. The submitted documents and drawings do not include a detailed schedule of accommodation however the submitted Design and Access Statement refers to the dwelling as having a floor area of 389.2sq.m., suggesting that the residual floor area accounts for the detached garage.

- 2.2. The proposal also includes removal of trees; additional landscaping and tree planting; new gate to the site entrance; partial widening of the existing driveway and extension of same to provide access to the rear of the dwelling; decommissioning of an existing septic tank and installation of a new tertiary wastewater treatment system and infiltration /treatment area. Construction of the development will require excavation of land.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Permission was refused for the following reason:

1. Having regard to the scale, form, and height of the proposed development, which is to an elevated position and would represent a significant increase in scale and form compared to the existing development, it is considered that the proposed development would have a significant detrimental impact on the visual and scenic landscape character of the area. The proposed development does not comply with Policies P-LCP-1, P-LCP-2 and P-LCP-3 of the Sligo County Development Plan (CDP) 2024-2030 and therefore would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. *Planning Reports*

The planner's report, dated 23rd January 2025, contains an assessment of the proposed development. Points of note include:

- The replacement of the existing dwelling is acceptable in principle.

- The existing site / dwelling is to an elevated position and due to the limited development to the south and which falls to the coastline, there are wide and expansive views of the site including from the Scenic route immediately in front of the site, the local road network, the coastline, Sligo Bay and the opposite side of the bay.
- Various provisions of the County Development Plan seek to protect the rural landscape from development of an inappropriate scale or form particularly in relation to visually vulnerable landscapes and views from scenic routes.
- Although there is development in the vicinity of the site, particularly to the east, the existing dwelling is otherwise an isolated feature within this rural and coastal landscape.
- The proposed dwelling represents a significant increase in built development on the site. This includes the overall width, height and volumetric form of the dwelling.
- Given the elevated nature of the site and exposed aspect to the north, the development would be visible over a significant distance and wide area.
- The prevailing character of the area does not include development of this scale and character.
- While the proposal is well-considered in terms of dwelling design and landscaping, this is not considered sufficient to mitigate against the visual harm of the overall scale and form of the development.
- Subject to conditions, there is no objection with regards road safety, adjoining residential amenity, archaeology, biodiversity and wastewater treatment.

3.2.2. *Other Technical Reports*

Area Engineer – No objection subject to conditions relating to access and drainage.

Environmental Services – no objection subject to conditions relating to wastewater treatment.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government – No objection subject to conditions relating to pre-development testing (Archaeology).

3.4. Third Party Observations

None

4.0 Planning History

4.1. Appeal Site

P.A. Ref. 20/403 – refers to a 2021 refusal for the demolition of the existing two storey dwelling and construction of a new two storey, over basement, dwelling (761sq.m). Reasons for refusal related to visual impact and stormwater management.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030

The Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030 took effect on the 11th November 2024 except for those parts of the Plan which are subject to a Draft Ministerial Direction. The Draft Ministerial Direction was issued on the 8th November 2024 and relates to land use zonings in a number of settlements and separately to text relating to access onto national primary roads. I am satisfied that the Draft Ministerial Direction has no direct implications for the appeal site.

Chapter 23 (Landscape Character), Chapter 26 (Residential Development) and Chapter 33 (Development Management Standards) of the County Development Plan are all considered relevant.

Chapter 23 (Landscape Character)

The Landscape Characterisation Map contained within the County Development Plan identifies the following designations:

- **Normal Rural Landscapes:** areas with natural features (e.g. topography, vegetation) which generally have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new

development forms – these are farming areas and cover most of the County. Certain areas located within normal rural landscapes may have superior visual qualities, due to their specific topography, vegetation pattern, the presence of traditional farming or residential structures. These areas may have limited capacity for development or may be able to absorb new development only if it is designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment.

- **Sensitive Rural Landscapes:** areas that tend to be open in character, highly visible, with intrinsic scenic qualities and a low capacity to absorb new development – e.g. Knocknarea, the Dartry Mountains, the Ox Mountains, Aughris Head, Mullaghmore Head etc.
- **Visually Vulnerable Areas:** distinctive and conspicuous natural features of significant beauty or interest, which have extremely low capacity to absorb new development – examples are the Ben Bulbin plateau, mountain and hill ridges, the areas adjoining Sligo's coastline, most lakeshores etc.
- **Scenic Routes:** public roads passing through or close to Sensitive Rural Landscapes, or in the vicinity of Visually Vulnerable Areas, and affording unique scenic views of distinctive natural features or vast open landscapes. In addition to remote views, scenic routes have often a distinctive visual character conferred by old road boundaries, such as stone walls, established hedgerows, lines of mature trees, adjoining cottages or farmyards together with their traditional, planted enclosures etc., all of which warrant protection.

A footnote on the map (Note 2) states that '*Scenic routes are public roads from which the views and prospects to Visually Vulnerable features are to be preserved*'.

Policy P-LCP-1 Protect the physical landscape, visual and scenic character of County Sligo and seek to preserve the County's landscape character. Planning applications for developments that have the potential to impact significantly and adversely upon landscape character, especially in Sensitive Rural Landscapes, Visually Vulnerable Areas and along Scenic routes, may be required to be accompanied by a visual impact assessment using agreed and appropriate viewing points and methods for the assessment.

Policy P-LCP-2 Discourage any developments that would be detrimental to the unique visual character of designated Visually Vulnerable Areas.

Policy P-LCP-3 Preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix C and the distinctive visual character of designated Scenic Routes by controlling development along such Routes and other roads, while facilitating developments that may be tied to a specific location or, in the case of individual houses, to the demonstrated needs of applicants to reside in a particular area. In all cases, strict location, siting and design criteria shall apply, as set out in Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas (development management standards).

Chapter 26 (Residential Development)

Policy P-RHOU-1 Encourage those who wish to build in rural areas to apply traditional principles in the siting and design of new houses, while facilitating high quality modern design solutions.

Policy P-RHOU-2 Require new house proposal in rural areas to comply with the guidance set out in Section 33.4 Housing in rural areas (development management standards).

Chapter 33 (Development Management Standards)

33.4 Housing in rural areas

New development in rural areas should be absorbed and integrated successfully into the rural setting, i.e. development should harmonise or ‘read’ with the existing traditional pattern of development and not intrude on unspoilt landscapes.

Normal planning considerations, including:

- Whether the site is in a sensitive area, e.g. adjoining a scenic route, located in a sensitive rural landscape, in a visually vulnerable area, in a coastal zone or in a known flood risk zone;
- Whether the site is in an exposed location where the proposed development would be visually obtrusive;
- Whether the siting, design and scale of the proposed development are appropriate to the surrounding natural and built environment;

- Whether a large number of mature trees or an excessive length of roadside hedgerow need to be removed to provide an entrance;

33.4.2 Site selection – locating a house in the landscape

Sets out criteria for assessment, including reference to the Landscape Characterisation Map and Site Location.

Table 33.5 - A guide to designing a house in the rural vernacular style

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not located within or adjacent to any designated sites. The closest European Sites are as follows:

- Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code: 000627), c. 190m to the north.
- Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code: 004035), c. 190m to the north.

Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) pNHA (Site Code 000627) is c. 190m to the north, and Knocknarea Mountain and Glen pNHA (Site Code 001670) c. 930m to the southwest.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

A first-party appeal was received against the decision of Sligo County Council to refuse permission. The grounds of the appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The site is not located in an exposed location and will not be visually obtrusive.
- The dwelling would be nestled into the site and will not dominate the landscape or diminish the quality of scenic views of the surrounding countryside. There are established mature trees and hedgerows on the site which can offer shelter, screening and backdrop to the proposed replacement dwelling.
- The replacement dwelling is larger than the existing dwelling but has been carefully broken up in terms of massing so as to minimise its scale from a visual perspective.

- Contends that the planning authority did fully consider the relevant policies and objectives of the County Development Plan in respect of visual impact, and did not provide any reasoning as to why the findings of the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment were not accepted.
- Reason for refusal refers to Policies P-LCP-1, P-LCP-2 and P-LCP-3.
- With respect to Policy P-LCP-1 (landscape character), the proposal will not interfere with the Scenic Route views of Visually Vulnerable Areas to the north, including the coastline and Sligo Harbour. The submitted landscape and visual impact assessment concludes that the proposal is not considered to give rise to any significant landscape / visual or cumulative impacts. Neighbouring dwellings are more exposed and far more visible than the proposed dwelling referring to the dense tree covering north of the site and proposed new tree planting.
- With respect to Policy P-LCP-2 (Visually Vulnerable Areas), views from the Scenic Route north of the site are towards identified Visually Vulnerable Areas further north, therefore there is no impact from the proposed development. By reason of the intervening distance, there would be no material impact on views south towards the site from Rosses Point. Submitted Landscape Visual Impact Assessment shows that Rosses Point is beyond the zone of theoretical visibility.
- With respect to Policy P-LCP-3 (Scenic Routes), the site is located in a Normal Rural Landscape, fronts a road that is a Scenic Route, with the coastline further north designated a Visual Vulnerable Area.

The County Development Plan is void of a map to cross reference with numbered routes contained in the appendices, therefore applicants for planning permission cannot readily identify scenic routes.

- With respect to the Normal Rural Landscape designation, the site may be described as having superior visual qualities due to its topography, and in this regard, the dwelling has been designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment with reference to its built form and setting within a densely planted site.

- All other issues were appropriately addressed and no objection from internal sections of Council.
- The proposal is fully consistent with the County Development Plan.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

A response, received on the 3rd March 2025, refers the Board to the planner's report and other reports prepared in connection with the assessment of the application. The planning authority also acknowledges the reference in the appeal to previous decisions in the area but considered that the applicant's submission to the Board does not include additional supporting information which would alter the assessment as made within the Planners Report and decision of the Planning Authority to refuse permission, noting that it remains the case that the proposed development is considered unsuitable at this location, contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

6.3. Observations

None

7.0 Assessment

Having examined the appeal details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the appeal, and inspected the site, and having regard to relevant policies and guidance, I consider that the main issues in this appeal are as follows:

- Visual Impact
- Other Matters

The issue of appropriate assessment screening also needs to be addressed.

7.1. Visual Impact

- 7.1.1. The decision of the planning authority to refuse permission and the response to same under the appeal is based principally on an assessment of the application against the

designations under the Landscape Characterisation Map and associated policy as contained in the County Development Plan.

- 7.1.2. The applicant contends that the proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to sit seamlessly within the receiving environment, making reference to its built form and setting within a densely planted site. A submitted landscape and visual impact assessment concludes that the proposal is not considered to give rise to any significant landscape / visual or cumulative impacts.
- 7.1.3. Policy P-LCP-1 of the County Development Plan seeks to protect the physical landscape, visual and scenic character of County Sligo and seek to preserve the County's landscape character. The Landscape Characterisation Map, as contained in the County Development Plan, appears to have been prepared by first designating land as being either a 'Normal Rural Landscape' or 'Sensitive Rural Landscape', then overlaid by the designation of Visually Vulnerable Areas and finally by Scenic Routes. In some instances, the map is not extremely clear, and a degree of common sense is required particularly where a Scenic Route overlaps a Visually Vulnerable Area.
- 7.1.4. On the basis of the foregoing, the Landscape Characterisation Map shows that the site is within a Normal Rural Landscape and also covered by a Scenic Route designation, which extends to cover immediately adjacent land on both sides of the road. As such, it is my view that Development Plan policy and guidance in both respects applies to the application.
- 7.1.5. In terms of Normal Rural Landscape, Section 23.2.2 of the County Development Plan outlines that in general normal rural landscapes have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new development forms however that certain areas located within normal rural landscapes may have superior visual qualities, including due to their specific topography or vegetation pattern, and that these areas may have limited capacity for development or may be able to absorb new development only if it is designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment. It is my view that by reason of its upward sloping terrain, exposure to the scenic route and the coast and established woodlands, the site and land in its vicinity, particularly running west, are visually sensitive and therefore, as per Section 23.3.3, any new development should seek to integrate seamlessly with the existing environment.

- 7.1.6. Policy P-LCP-3 of the County Development Plan relates to Scenic Routes and seeks to preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix C and seeks to preserve the distinctive visual character of designated Scenic Routes. The policy also refers to Section 33.4 of the County Development Plan which related to development management standards for housing in rural areas.
- 7.1.7. In terms of preserved scenic views, Appendix C (Designated Routes) contains a list of roads designated as Scenic Routes and provides further details of the views to be preserved. The scenic route designation for the R292 is broken down into specific sections of the road to reflect views towards specific visually vulnerable features. The relevant section of the R292 in this case is the route contained between St. Anne's Church and Rectory (c. 390m west of the site) and the junction with the L-3502 at Scarden (c. 1.5km east of the site), and relates to views of Sligo Harbour, Sligo Bay and Ben Bulbin, all located due north and north-east of the route.
- 7.1.8. By reason of the site's location on the southern side of the R292, I consider that the proposed development does not have any material bearing on preserved views north from the R292.
- 7.1.9. On the opposite side of Sligo Bay, due north of the site, is the R291 (Sligo to Rosses Point), which is also designated as a Scenic Route. Referring again to Appendix C of the County Development Plan, the views sought to be preserved along this scenic route relate to those of Sligo Bay and Harbour, Coney Island, Knocknarea hill and Coolera Peninsula, Slieve Dargan, Slieve Daeane, Killery Mountain and Ox Mountains, all located due south, south-west and south-east of the R291. Given the locational context of the site due south of the R291 / Rosses Point, I consider that the preserved views from the R291 towards Knocknarea hill and Coolera Peninsula are relevant to this appeal. Knocknarea Hill is also designated a Visually Vulnerable Area.
- 7.1.10. During a site inspection, I travelled to Rosses Point where the R291 is aligned along edge of Sligo Bay offering uninterrupted views of Sligo Bay and the Coolera Peninsula to the south. I observed that by reason of the intervening distance, views are dominated by Knocknarea hill with dwellings and other development within the foothills being indiscernible to an extent to reduce the value of the preserved views of Knocknarea hill and Coolera Peninsula as a whole. While the proposed dwelling is larger in scale than the existing dwelling on the site, and while the submitted

photomontage would suggest that all mature trees on the site are being retained, I consider that by reason of the intervening distance and the expansive view from the R241 at Rosses Point, the proposed development would not have any material bearing on preserved views south from the R291.

- 7.1.11. By association with the above, I consider that the proposed development would not have any material bearing on Knocknarea Hill to the south or Sligo Bay to the north as Visually Vulnerable Areas, thus the proposal does not conflict with Policy P-LCP-2 of the County Development Plan in this respect.
- 7.1.12. In terms of the localised context, and as outlined above, in addition to the preservation of identified views from scenic routes, Policy P-LCP-3 also seeks to preserve the distinctive visual character of designated scenic routes, while Section 23.2.2 recognises that Normal Rural Landscape can portray superior visual qualities which are worth protecting. Furthermore, Section 33.4.2 (development management standards) of the County Development Plan relates to the siting of houses in the rural area and includes that a house should “nestle” into the site and not dominate the landscape or diminish the quality of scenic views of the surrounding countryside, and that sites should be sheltered, where possible, by topography and by established natural boundaries, noting that already established mature trees and hedgerows can offer shelter, screening or backdrop to new houses.
- 7.1.13. The proposed split-level two-storey dwelling has a stated floor area of c. 389.2sq.m. The dwelling, which comprises a three-block formation, has a length along the front / north elevation of c. 28.85m or c. 35.6m if the first-floor level terrace on the western end is included, compared to the length of the existing dwelling at c. 17.6m. Taking account of finished floor levels, the relative height of the proposed dwelling, at +102.65m, equates to a building of c. 1m higher than the existing dwelling. As outlined above, the existing dwelling comprises pitched roofs whereas the three blocks that make up the proposed replacement dwelling comprise butterfly type roofs contained within parapet height walls to the outer elevations.
- 7.1.14. The submitted landscape and visual impact assessment provides montages of the proposed development, including 3 no. viewpoints on the R292, comprising VP3 northwest of the site and VP4 and VP5 northeast of the site. The evaluation of the montages found the Significance of Visual Impact to be ‘slight’ for VP3, ‘slight-

imperceptible' for VP4 and 'imperceptible' for VP5. The evaluation places significant emphasis on existing vegetation on the site concluding that the development *has limited potential to materially impact the local landscape character as it is heavily screened by the dense vegetation that occurs within the northern portions of the site.*

- 7.1.15. However, the proposal includes the removal of a significant number of trees including the entire tree line within the eastern boundary, which comprises predominantly mature leylandii trees. The removal of these trees is required to accommodate the proposed development including the extended driveway. Referring to the submitted Arboricultural Report, within the downward slope on the northern end of the site, between the dwelling and the driveway, it is proposed to remove 14 no. trees (11 no. Category 'U' – unsuitable for retention, and 3 no. Category C – trees of low quality). There would be 13 no. trees retained within this area north of the dwelling, all of which are identified as being Category C – trees of low quality. The landscape plan indicates that the woodland area to the front of the site would be interplanted where rejuvenation and future coverage is required. The landscape plan indicates that the existing hedge along the eastern boundary would be reduced to 1.5m to encourage regrowth.
- 7.1.16. In my view the evaluation of visual impact as set out in the submitted landscape and visual impact assessment does not take sufficient account of the scale of proposed tree removal on the site.
- 7.1.17. Furthermore, from a visual impact perspective, and considering the scale, mass and bulk of the proposed dwelling, together with the necessary removal of Category U trees and potential further loss of Category C2 trees within the front section of the site, I have concern that the dwelling would appear as an overly dominate feature in the landscape, noting the parapet level across the whole structure is c. 1m above the ridge height of the existing dwelling.
- 7.1.18. My concern in this regard is compounded by the layout and fenestration detail at ground floor level of the proposed dwelling, with this level comprising 3 no. bedrooms, a bathroom and a study. The study is afforded a north / north-east facing window c. 2.7m high and c. 3.95m wide, returning to create a corner element, with the incorporation of a window seat. Two of the bedrooms are afforded a similar window arrangement, but with lesser window widths at c. 2.2m and c. 3.4m, and one with a window seat. I also note the proposed realignment of the driveway to the east side of

the proposed dwelling, which has the effect of removing cars from the front / north of the dwelling. It is my view that the loss of trees within the northern woodland, including potential loss of remaining Category C2 trees within the same area would benefit coastal outlook for north / northeast facing ground floor windows. In this regard, I am concerned that the proposal will lead to the dwelling, which is of significant scale, being exposed within the local landscape in the longer term.

7.1.19. This is in contrast to the existing dwelling on the site, whilst it might not be of high architectural or aesthetic quality, it does appear to have been designed in a compact form and to facilitate coastal views at first floor level only.

7.1.20. On the basis of the foregoing, having regard to the elevated and exposed nature of the site within a sensitive rural and coastal landscape on a Scenic Route, the nature of the proposal including the scale, mass and bulk of the replacement dwelling, I consider that the proposed development would appear as a dominant and incongruous feature in the rural landscape, adversely impacting on the visual and scenic character of the area including the adjacent Scenic Route, contrary to Policy P-LCP-1 and Policy P-LCP-3 of the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030.

7.2. Other Matters

Site Suitability Assessment

The applicant has completed a Site Characterisation Form that concludes the site is suitable for a septic tank or secondary treatment system, however due to the tight constraints on the site, the proposal is to install a Tertiary Treatment System to reduce the distribution area. I note that within a trial hole excavated to a depth of 2m no ground water or bedrock was encountered. An average T-value of 32 and a subsurface percolation value of 34 were recorded. Based on the submitted information it has been demonstrated that the proposed wastewater treatment system complies with EPA Code of Practice guidance in terms of ground conditions and separation distance. I note the Planning Authority conclude that the site is suitable for the treatment of wastewater. I consider that the proposal to install a tertiary treatment system in this instance is acceptable. If the Board is minded to grant permission, I recommend that a suitable condition is included.

Archaeology

The south-western rear corner of the site is located within the zone of notification for recorded monument SL014-031--- (Ringfort). The planning authority received a submission from the Development Assessment Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage raising no objection subject to the inclusion of a condition requiring pre-development testing. Considering the extent of excavation required at the rear of the existing dwelling footprint, if the Board is minded to grant permission, I recommend that a condition is included to require pre-development testing.

Bats – New Issue

The application includes the demolition of a vacant dwelling and removal of trees. While the applicant refers to a previous bat survey, no such survey was submitted with the current application. Considering that the dwelling appears to have been vacant for a significant period of time and the presence of a woodland in the immediate vicinity of the dwelling, it is my view that there is potential for bat roosting on the site. This is a new issue and the Board may wish to seek the views of the parties. However, having regard to the substantive reason for refusal set out below, it may not be considered necessary to pursue the matter.

8.0 Appropriate Assessment

Refer to Appendix 2. Having regard to nature, scale and location of the proposed development, including intervening land uses, it is concluded that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise as the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

9.0 EIA Screening

The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendix 1 of this report). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no

real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

10.0 Recommendation

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

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the elevated and exposed nature of the site within a sensitive rural and coastal landscape and on a Scenic Route, the nature of the proposal including the scale, mass and bulk of the replacement dwelling and removal of trees, I consider that the proposed development would appear as a dominant and incongruous feature in the rural landscape, adversely impacting on the visual and scenic character of the area and R292 Scenic Route, contrary to Policy P-LCP-1 and Policy P-LCP-3 of the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030, and therefore 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.

Jim Egan
Planning Inspector

8th May 2025

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	ABP-321883-25
Proposed Development Summary	Demolition of dwelling and construction of dwelling and associated site works.
Development Address	Tully, Strandhill, Sligo, F91 FE02
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under	

<p>Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994.</p> <p>No Screening required.</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.</p> <p>EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.</p> <p>Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)</p>	<p>10(b)(i): Construction of more than 500 dwelling units</p>

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1 - Form 2

EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	ABP-321523-24
Proposed Development Summary	Demolition of dwelling and construction of dwelling and associated site works.
Development Address	Tully, Strandhill, Sligo, F91 FE02
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 (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	<p>The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing dwelling and construction of a new dwelling, decommissioning of a septic tank and installation of a tertiary wastewater system.</p> <p>The development comes forward as a standalone project, does not require the use of substantial natural resources, or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance. The development, by virtue of its type, does not pose a risk of major accident and/or disaster, or is vulnerable to climate change. It presents no risks to human health.</p>
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	<p>The site is not located within or immediately adjacent to any designated site. The proposed development would be connected to a public water supply. The proposal would include the decommissioning of a septic tank and installation of a new tertiary wastewater system. Stormwater would be directed to a series of soakaways.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect individually, or in-combination with other plans and projects, on a European Site and appropriate assessment is therefore not required.</p>
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters,	<p>Having regard to the nature of the proposed development, its location removed from sensitive habitats/features, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on</p>

magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	the environmental factors listed in section 171A of the Act.
Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.
There is significant and realistic doubt regarding the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	
There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

AA Screening

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	Demolition of dwelling and construction of dwelling and associated site works See Section 2.0 of Inspector's Report.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	<p>The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing dwelling and construction of a new dwelling, decommissioning of a septic tank and installation of a tertiary wastewater system.</p> <p>The proposed development would be connected to a public water supply, decommissioning of a septic tank and installation of a new tertiary wastewater system. Stormwater would be directed to a series of soakaways. The submitted design statement also refers to rainwater harvesting to be installed under the parking area to collect and store rainwater.</p> <p>Construction of the development would require ground excavation. There are no details provided in terms of the volume of material to be excavated.</p> <p>There are no watercourses or other ecological features of note on or adjacent to the site that would connect it directly to European Sites in the wider area.</p>
Screening report	<p>Yes, an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd. was submitted with the application. The report provides a description of the proposed development, identifies the European Sites within a possible zone of influence of the development and an assessment of the potential impacts arising from the development.</p> <p>The report finds the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code 000627) and Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code 004035) are within the zone of influence due to their proximity to the site and are subject to further assessment.</p> <p>The report identifies a number of qualifying interests of the SAC which could be potentially impacted by the proposed development by virtue of the development being located</p>

	<p>within the current known distribution and favourable reference range of the qualifying interests. The report also identifies a number of qualifying interests of the SPA which could be potentially impacted by the proposed development given the location of suitable habitat (approx. 165m to SPA).</p> <p>Further assessment concludes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no potential for a significant impact on water quality as there is no potential for groundwater contamination or significant surface water runoff or contamination from the proposed site that would enter any watercourse that is hydrologically connected to the SAC / SPA.• No works will take place in proximity to a waterbody or riparian zone therefore no disturbance of species / birds will occur. <p>The AA screening report concludes that it is considered that there would be no significant risk of a likely negative impact, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects to the Natura 2000 network. Therefore, a Natura Impact Statement is not required.</p> <p>The planning authority concluded that by reason of the site being removed from the SAC and that in the absence of any hydrological link and noting intervening development, it is considered that the proposed development, on its own or in combination with other projects, would not have significant effects on nearby Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, Appropriate Assessment is not required.</p>			
Natura Impact Statement	No			
Relevant submissions	No			
Step 2: Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model				
European Site (code)	Qualifying interests Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, 2nd May 2025)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections	Consider further in screening Y/N
Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code: 000627)	Coastal habitat (estuaries, mudflats, sandflats, dunes, heath and grasslands).	c. 190m	No direct connection. Proximity	Y

	Whorl snail, lamprey and harbour seal. Conservation Objectives NPWS, 2024			
Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code: 004035)	Wintering water birds (3 no. species). Wetland and waterbirds Conservation Objectives NPWS, 2013	c. 190m	No direct connection. Proximity	Y

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

AA Screening matrix

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code: 000627) Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and	Direct: No direct impacts and no risk of habitat loss, fragmentation or any other direct impact. Indirect: Low risk of surface water runoff from construction reaching sensitive receptors. Intervening land and land uses, including the R292, provides a buffer Which would dilute any minor emissions. Operational: foul water will be managed by way of a new on-site tertiary system. Surface water will be attenuated by a network of soak pits.	The nature of the site in terms of no direct ecological connections or pathways, and intervening land uses, including the R292, make it highly unlikely that the proposed development could generate impacts of a magnitude that could affect habitat quality within the SAC for the QIs listed. Conservation objectives would not be undermined.

<p>scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]</p> <p>Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]</p> <p>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p>Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]</p>		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): No	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? No	
	Impacts	Effects
<p>Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code: 004035)</p> <p>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130]</p> <p>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>Direct: No direct impacts.</p> <p>Indirect: Low risk of surface water runoff from construction reaching sensitive receptors.</p> <p>Intervening land and land uses, including the R292, provides a buffer Which would dilute any minor emissions.</p> <p>Operational: foul water will be managed by way of a new on-site tertiary system. Surface water will be attenuated by a network of soak pits.</p>	<p>The nature of the site in terms of no direct ecological connections or pathways, and intervening land uses, including the R292, make it highly unlikely that the proposed development could generate impacts of a magnitude that could affect habitat quality within the SPA for the QIs listed. Also, the nature of the development being a replacement dwelling, is unlikely to have any significant ex-situ impacts on wintering water birds.</p> <p>Conservation objectives would not be undermined.</p>
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): No	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? No	

Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on the Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code: 000627) or Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code: 004035), or any other European site. The proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on any European sites. No further assessment is required for the project.

I conclude that the proposed development (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) would not result in likely significant effects on European sites. No further assessment is required for the project.

No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.

Screening Determination**Finding of no likely significant effects**

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC (Site Code: 000627) or Cummeen Strand SPA (Site Code: 004035), or any other European site, in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.

This determination is based on:

- Information submitted as part of the applicant's Appropriate Assessment Screening report
- Nature of the proposed development
- Distances to the nearest European sites and the hydrological pathway considerations
- Intervening land uses
- no significant ex-situ impacts on wintering water birds.