



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-322530-25

Development	A single storey cabin, for office use, and all associated site works
Location	Bridge Street , Abbeycartron Td , Co. Longford
Planning Authority	Longford County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2560034
Applicant(s)	Double Vista Investments
Type of Application	Retention permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse permission
Type of Appeal	First party
Appellant(s)	Double Vista Investments
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	14 th August 2025
Inspector	Bébhinn O'Shea

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site, as indicated in red, located on Bridge Street in Longford Town between two terraced buildings including an area to the rear. There are gates at the entrance point.
- 1.2. The area of land under the ownership/control of the applicant (being outlined in blue on the site location map), includes a large, terraced structure to the south, which expresses as 3 storey with pitched roof to street and 5 storey with flat roof to rear. This contains apartments and has a small area of open space at lower ground level to rear, partly undercroft and containing a children's play area. The landholding, as outlined in blue, also contains a three storey terraced building to the north.
- 1.3. The site, as outlined in red, is fenced to the rear. There are steps to the side of the cabin, leading to the open area of the adjacent buildings to south, at lower ground level to rear.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development is a single storey prefabricated structure, 53sm in area, proposed to be used as an office. It accommodates two desks, meeting room and WC and is c. 6m x 9m x 3m (WxLxH). Connections are proposed to existing public water supply, public foul sewer, and public surface water sewer/drain.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Permission was **refused** for the following reasons:

1. Having regard to the existing vacant retail/commercial units immediately adjacent within the same landholding the applicant has not demonstrated a need for an additional office in the form of a prefabricated structure at this location. It is considered to permit the proposed development would be an inappropriate sub-standard form of development which would set an undesirable precedent for developments of a similar nature. The development to be retained would therefore be contrary to the policy objective CPO 8.16 of the Longford County

Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. Having regard to the prefabricated design of the single storey office within the Longford Town Core area which maintains a strong traditional streetscape, it is considered that the proposed development would have a detrimental visual impact on the appearance and character of the area. The development to be retained would set an undesirable precedent for developments of a similar design. The development to be retained would therefore be contrary to the policy objective CPO 8.69 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The Planning Report

- Considered the development acceptable in terms of office use however noted that any proposed office use within the town core area is required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town core area, promoting commercial activities.
- Noted CPO 8.16 and that it is not considered appropriate to permit a prefabricated structure for office use on a landholding that currently has vacant retail/commercial units which can fulfil the applicant's required need for office accommodation.
- Noted CPO 8.69 and that the prefabricated structure, due to its siting, design and material finish, does not appropriately integrate with the existing streetscape.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Area Engineer: No objection subject to conditions

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

No submissions

3.4. Third Party Observations

No submissions

4.0 Planning History

23/60218 and **ABP24.319164** permission was refused and refused on appeal for change of use from existing vacant restaurant and retail units to 3 residential apartments and all associated site works.

19/254 Permission granted for retention of as built modifications to existing mixed use development permitted under Planning Ref: PL04/700086. Revised building footprint, extensions and revised footprints to various apartments and restaurant, amalgamation of shop units, construction of office and store, external modifications. Expiry date 02/01/2025.

04/700086 Permission granted for demolition of existing derelict buildings and construction of restaurant and 3 retail units at ground and basement level, and 17 apartments

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National Policy:

The National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040 sets out the focus on pursuing a compact growth policy at national, regional, and local level. From an urban perspective the aim is to deliver a greater proportion of residential development within existing built-up areas; to facilitate infill development and enable greater densities to be achieved, whilst achieving high quality and design standards.

5.2. Regional Policy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 provides a framework for development at regional level promoting the regeneration of our cities, towns, and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint.

5.3. Development Plan

5.3.1. The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 (LCDP) is the relevant plan.

The site is zoned Town Core:

“To provide for the development and enhancement of town core uses including retail, residential, commercial, civic and other uses.

The purpose of this zoning is to protect and enhance the special character of the town centre and to provide for and improve retailing, residential, commercial, cultural and other uses appropriate to the centre of Longford. This zoning provides for the consolidated development and growth of the town centre, allowing for a broad range of compatible and complementary uses which will be encouraged to locate in this area. Development will be expected to contribute to a dynamic, vibrant and pedestrian focused town core with a strong urban design approach. The Council will encourage the appropriate re-use, adaptation and regeneration of buildings, backlands, derelict and obsolete lands including residential development above retail and commercial premises in the town centre.

Offices are “Permitted in Principle” under the zoning.

5.3.2. Chapter 8 relates to Economic Development.

CPO 8.6 Promote the reuse of vacant retail floorspace. Where no viable retail use can be sustained, alternative uses will be assessed on their own merits against the requirements of the proper planning and sustainable development of the areas within which they are located.

CPO 8.16 Encourage the reuse of sites and/or existing building stock where possible.

CPO 8.69 Encourage the further improvement and development of commercial, service, social and cultural functions which its town and village centres perform, while ensuring the protection of the important heritage and architectural quality of their streetscapes. This will apply to the skyline, shop fronts and advertising structures

5.4. Local Area Plan

- 5.4.1. The Longford Town and Environs Local Area Plan 2025-2031 came into effect on 3rd June 2025. The zoning is that of the LCDP, which is incorporated into the LAP, along with any future variations to same. The development site is not within any strategic sites identified in the LAP.

5.5. Natural Heritage Designations

- Royal Canal pNHA 700m south
- Carrickglass Demesne pNHA c. 3.66 km east
- Brown Bog SAC/pNHA c. 3km west

6.0 EIA Screening

See Appendix 1. The proposed development may be considered under Class 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations) and therefore has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices 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.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

The appeal states that:

- The adjacent vacant retail/commercial units are intended to be developed based on planning ref. 19/254 commencing in 2025; these will not then be

available for use as office space. Their permitted use is restaurant and retail only.

- There is a mix of traditional and modern design in this area, typical of a streetscape that has been altered/varied over last 30 years. The structure is set back from street, visually shielded by adjoining buildings. It is not considered to impact the streetscape.
- The immediate area has many vacant units and is in need of rejuvenation.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

No response.

7.3. Observations

None.

7.4. Further Responses

None.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the submissions received in relation to the appeal, the reports of the local authority, and having inspected the site, having regard to the relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this appeal to be considered are as follows:

- Principal of development
- Impact on visual amenity
- Vacancy/vitality of the town centre

8.2. The principle of office development is acceptable having regard to the zoning of the site. While not stated on the application form, the office appears to be in use for the administration of the letting of apartment units within the building to the south. I have no objection to such ancillary office use within the landholding/at this location.

- 8.3. The development to be retained is part of a larger landholding containing several vacant units at ground floor and lower ground floor level. These exist within the terraced building to south and that to north. I note that the appeal acknowledges that “the immediate area has many vacant units and is in need of rejuvenation” yet rather than occupy a vacant unit and contribute to rejuvenation, a temporary style structure has been installed.
- 8.4. I note the appellants position that the vacant units (within terrace to south) will not be available for use in the future due to intentions to complete the development of that building as per 19/254. I note the expiry date of this permission as 02/01/2025. I also note that permission was sought (and refused) under 23/60218 and ABP24.319164 for change of use from existing vacant restaurant and retail units to 3 residential apartments. There is no comment within the appeal in relation to the building to north, shown to be within the blue line of the landholding, and its availability.
- 8.5. There are several policy objectives within the LCDP which seek to address large levels of vacancy within the town centre, e.g. CPOs 4.3, 6.21, 8.65, 8.67. The proposed development to be retained, at a location immediately adjacent vacant premises which are indicated to be within the ownership/control of the appellant, undermines these policy objectives, and undermines the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.
- 8.6. While the prominence of the structure to be retained is lessened by its recessed location, I consider that it is anomalous in terms of the streetscape and architectural character in the area, in terms of its building line, design and materials. I consider that it detracts from the traditional architecture of the area, which is largely reflected in the form of other more recent additions, and would negatively impact on the visual amenity of the town centre. Given the availability of other vacant properties, this impact is entirely unnecessary.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.
- 9.2. The subject site is located c. 3km east of Brown Bog SAC. The proposed development comprises the retention of a single storey cabin, for office use, and all

associated site works. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the planning appeal.

9.3. 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 nature of the development and small scale of works.
- The distance from the nearest European Site and lack of connections.
- The location of the site within a serviced urban area and with an existing connection to a wastewater network and
- Taking into account the screening report/determination by the Planning Authority

9.4. 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.

10.0 Water Framework Directive Screening

10.1. The subject site is located within Longford Town, within the Shannon [Upper] _SC_060 sub catchment and within the Longford Ballinalee ground water body.

10.2. The proposed development comprises the retention of a single storey cabin, for office use, and all associated site works. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal.

10.3. I have assessed the retention of the single storey cabin and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the development I am satisfied that the development can be eliminated from further

assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- The small scale and nature of the development
- The proposed connection to public drainage infrastructure and lack of hydrological connections to waterbodies

10.4. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the development to be retained would not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

11.0 Recommendation

The development to be retained undermines the policy objectives within the LCDP to address vacancy within the town centre, and would detract from the visual amenity and character of the area and create a precedent for such development. I recommend refusal of permission as set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the existing vacant retail/commercial units immediately adjacent within the same landholding, the applicant has not demonstrated a need for an additional office in the form of a prefabricated structure at this location. It is considered to permit the proposed development would be an inappropriate sub-standard form of development, which would set an undesirable precedent for developments of a similar nature and undermine policy to address vacancy within the town centre. The development to be retained would therefore be contrary to the policy objective CPO 8.16 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. Having regard to the prefabricated design of the single storey office within the Longford Town Core area, which maintains a strong traditional streetscape, it is

considered that the proposed development would have a detrimental visual impact on the appearance and character of the area. The development to be retained would set an undesirable precedent for developments of a similar design. The development to be retained would therefore be contrary to the policy objective CPO 8.69 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 and 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.

Bébhinn O'Shea

Senior Planning Inspector

21st August 2025

Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	322530-25
Proposed Development Summary	Retention of a single storey cabin, for office use, and all associated site works
Development Address	Bridge Street Longford
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.	State the Class here
<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	

<p>development under 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>The development may be considered urban development under Class 10 (b) (iv):</p> <p>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.</p>

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	322530-25
Proposed Development Summary	Retention of a single storey cabin, for office use, and all associated site works
Development Address	Bridge Street Longford
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).	Small portacabin
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).	Development in urban area with no sensitive characteristics. Connecting to drainage infrastructure.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	The development would not result in the production of any significant waste, emissions or pollutants.
Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA <i>[Delete if not relevant]</i>

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.	