



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ACP-323373-25

Development

Retention permission for a) revised vehicular access and parking arrangement for a previously approved house and b) single storey extensions and other minor changes to the previously approved house, on part of the previously approved site (reg. ref. 98/1026).

Location

Clifden, Westport Road, Co. Galway

Planning Authority

Galway County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

2560663

Applicant(s)

Michael Delahunty

Type of Application

Retention permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse permission

Type of Appeal

First Party

Appellant(s)

Michael Delahunty

Observer(s)

None

Date of Site Inspection

12th November 2025

Inspector

Bébhinn O'Shea

1.0 Site Location and Description

The site is located on the Westport Road in Clifden. The site, as outlined in red, is accessed through the main access gates of Hawthorn Lodge (a two storey development mostly in crescent formation) then routes along the southern and eastern boundaries of that development to the subject dwelling, to the north east. The immediate surrounding area is mostly characterised by dispersed residential development; higher density residential infill is under construction to the west.

2.0 Proposed Development

Retention permission is sought for a) a revised vehicular access and parking arrangement for a previously approved house and b) single storey extensions and other minor changes to the previously approved house, on part of the previously approved site (reg. ref. 98/1026).

The revised vehicular access routes along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site of Hawthorn Lodge, where a Right of Way is indicated. The extensions are minor in scale.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

The Planning Authority refused permission for the following reason:

“The planning authority considers the proposed retention of this building on a revised boundary as an independent/standalone development, as piecemeal development owing to the ancillary use associated with the building as a caretakers residence to the Connemara Walking & Cycling accommodation centre permitted under the terms of file reference number 98/1026.

Furthermore, to permit the proposed development in the absence of a formalised and secure vehicular route of passage from the proposed revised site boundary to the public road network would constitute a substandard arrangement with potential for conflict to arise between traffic utilising the commercial development permitted under

file reference no. 98/1026 and traffic egressing from this proposed revised arrangement for an independent/standalone development. The proposed development would therefore, if permitted, have potential to materially contravene the parent permission on site under file reference no. 98/1026 from (inter alia) a parking provision perspective and present an overall discordant arrangement with undue risk of traffic hazard and would accordingly be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. The Planning Report noted:

- The zoning of the site as Residential is acknowledged.
- The building was approved as an ancillary caretaker's residence only, in association with the adjoining Connemara Walking & Cycling accommodation centre. The Planning Authority is not amenable to the retention of an ancillary unit on a specific/dedicated plot having regard to the planning history
- The proposed development has potential to constitute a discordant arrangement owing to (inter alia) the lack of any dedicated vehicular access to same from the public road network. This issue remains unaddressed since refusals under file references no. 24/61389 and no. 24/60997.
- The proposals constitute a potential traffic hazard in the absence of any formally defined and secure vehicular route of passage between the newly revised site outlined and the public road network.
- There is potential for conflict between traffic utilizing the commercial development (permitted under file reference no. 98/1026) and traffic egressing from this proposed revised development .
- No objection in terms of design and visual impact and impact on residential amenity

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- There were no other technical reports. I note the Planning Report references consultation with the Roads & Transportation Unit.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

TII: Requests the planning authority has regard to the provisions of official policy for development impacting national roads and light rail network, as appropriate.

3.4. Third Party Observations

No submissions

4.0 Planning History

97/1776 Outline Permission granted to Michael Gibbons for Connemara Walking/Cycling Centre with Caretakers residence, bicycle storage and staff accommodation

98/1026 Approval permission granted to Michael Gibbons for Connemara Walking/Cycling Centre with caretakers residence, bicycle storage and staff accommodation. (Drawings indicate 31 ensuite bedrooms, 3 Group Leader ensuite rooms, 5 ensuite staff bedrooms, 38 parking spaces)

07/426 Application by Michael Gibbons for change of use, extension and renovation of existing centre to 25 no. apartments and construction of new apartment block with 6 units, demolition of existing habitable dwelling, upgrade existing sewage treatment plant (if required) - withdrawn

19/316 Permission refused to Michael Delahunty for Change of use of the existing hostel/walking centre to residential use, consisting of 18 apartments

24/61389 Permission refused to Michael Delahunty for changes from previously approved permission (98/1026) on a revised site boundary, with changes to the building footprint and with other minor design changes.

Reason for refusal: The planning authority consider the proposed retention of this building independently on a revised boundary as piecemeal development owing to the ancillary use associated with the building as a caretakers residence to the Connemara Walking & Cycling accommodation centre permitted under the terms of file reference number 98/1026. Furthermore, to permit the proposed development in the absence of a formalized and secure vehicular route of passage being demonstratable from the proposed revised

site boundary to the public road network would constitute a substandard arrangement with potential for conflict to arise between traffic utilizing the commercial development permitted under file reference no. 98/1026 and traffic egressing from this proposed revised arrangement/standalone development. The proposed development would therefore, if permitted, have potential to materially contravene the parent permission on site under file reference no. 98/1026 from (inter alia) a parking provision perspective and present an overall discordant arrangement with undue risk of traffic hazard and would accordingly be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

24/60997 Permission refused to Micheal Delahunty for changes from previously approved permission (98/1026) on a revised site boundary, with changes to the building footprint and with other minor design changes.

Reason for refusal: The planning authority consider the proposed retention of this building independently on a revised boundary as piecemeal development owing to the ancillary use associated with the building as a caretakers residence to the Connemara Walking & Cycling accommodation centre permitted under the terms of file reference number 98/1026. Furthermore, to permit the proposed development in the absence of a formalized and secure vehicular route of passage being demonstratable from the proposed revised site boundary to the public road network is considered substandard with potential for conflict to arise between traffic utilizing the commercial development permitted under file reference no. 98/1026 and traffic egressing from this proposed revised arrangement/standalone development. The proposed development would therefore, if permitted, present an overall discordant arrangement with undue risk of traffic hazard and would accordingly be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

The relevant plan is the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (GCDP).

The proposed development is for domestic access and parking arrangements, and an extension to dwelling. The most relevant chapters are

- **Chapter 3 Placemaking, Regeneration & Urban Living**, which at a high level sets out principle considerations for built form;
- **Chapter 6 Transport and Movement**, which at a high level sets out policy objectives for integration of land use and transportation and promotes sustainable transport choices and modal shift from the car.
- **Chapter 15 - Development Management Standards**, including:

DM Standard 4: House Extensions (Urban and Rural)

Proposed extensions shall:

- 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 is proposed;
- 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.

DM Standard 31: Parking Standards

Table 15.5 illustrates the car parking standards for different types of development. It is stated *“It should be noted that a flexible approach to these standards may be applied where such a case is substantiated, there is no traffic safety issue, and it is clearly demonstrated to the Planning Authority in the interest of proper planning and development, that the standard should be adjusted to facilitate the site specific context”*.

- **Volume 2 - Clifden Settlement Plan:**

The site is zoned Existing Residential, where the Policy Objective is *To protect and improve residential amenities of existing residential areas*. The description is *To provide for house improvements alterations, extensions and appropriate infill residential development in accordance with principles of good design and protection of existing residential amenity*.

The site is within Flood Zone C and not at risk of flooding.

5.2. Built and Natural Heritage Designations

There are no built or natural heritage features, or archaeological features within or in close proximity to the site. The following nearest European Sites are noted:

The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC c. 650m from site

Connemara Bog Complex SAC c. 1.6 km from site

Connemara Bog Complex SPA c. 3.16km from site.

6.0 EIA Screening

The revised vehicular access is not a project for the purposes of EIA. The extension is a project for the purposes of EIA but is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations). No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination. Refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 of report.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

These are set out as follows:

- The applicant owns other property but this has been his home since 2014. He wishes to regularise its status.

- The proposal does not constitute piecemeal development as it is a fully serviced standalone private dwelling on zoned residential land.
- The vehicular access is a driveway to the Hawthorn Lodge and the subject dwelling and has been used without any safety or security issues for 25 years. It is a registered right of way and the consent of the landowner has been obtained.
- Shared access arrangements are not uncommon. The entrance is on a straight stretch of road, lightly trafficked with good visibility.
- With regard to contravention of planning permission for a Connemara Walking and Cycling Centre, this centre was built 25 years ago (except for an underpass and road connection to the rear). The Centre did not materialise and the complex has functioned as B&B tourist accommodation and refugee accommodation since. The appellant acquired the subject house, which was the caretaker's residence, in 2014. The Planning Authority decision is focussing on defunct aspects of that planning application. Also it fails to note the accommodation block built near the house in 2024.
- There are no issues in relation to AA.
- The building extensions enhance the appearance of the house

7.2. Planning Authority Response

No response received.

7.3. Observations

No observations.

7.4. Further Responses

No further responses.

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the appeal, the reports of the local authority, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant

local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this appeal relate to:

- the principal of development
- the adequacy of the revised access/parking arrangements for the dwelling,
- the use of the dwelling,
- the impact of the development on the parking provision for Hawthorn Lodge,
- the design of the extensions in terms of visual and residential amenity.

8.2. For the benefit of the Commission I highlight at the outset the following :

- The adjacent development on site at Hawthorn Lodge is different to that permitted under 98/1026. The development permitted was in the form of a crescent, and had an archway at the central point of the curve, through which vehicular access to the subject dwelling was to be provided, with service road at location of now proposed access route. In reality, the rear of this archway is blocked up and provides a covered/enclosed external area. A parking area permitted under 98/1026 to the east of the crescent is not present; I note an additional 2 storey block on site, constructed to the east of the crescent form, at much of the permitted location for parking under 98/1026.
- Although the development was permitted as a walking/cycling centre, it is not in use as such and appears to house refugees/international protection applicants. The cover letter accompanying the application sets this out. There is no planning history relating to the current use on site, or recently constructed 2 storey block, and I acknowledge such development typically relies on the provisions of exempted development regulations. The Planning Authority report makes no comment on current use, or the background the applicant has set out in the cover letter. No unauthorised use/development on site is noted and it is stated in the planning report that there is no enforcement history.
- I also highlight that there is a difference in the subject case and application under 24/61389 and 24/60997; those applications defined the site as an 'enclave' within Hawthorn Lodge, divorced from any access arrangements from the public road. The current application indicates an access route to the dwelling and Right of Way

for same, as far as the access onto the public road. I note this Right of Way is registered on the relevant folio.

- The applicant has stated he is the owner of the site (outlined red). The site location map shows the lands of Hawthorn Lodge outlined in blue, indicating the applicant owns these lands. This appears to be an error - correspondence accompanying the application states that another party owns Hawthorn Lodge. In correspondence submitted with the application, that party acknowledges the right of way and consents to the making of the application.

My assessment follows.

8.3. Principle of development: The development to be retained relates to improvements and alteration of existing residential development and I consider it consistent with the zoning objective of the site.

8.4. Revised access/parking: The application has been made for “revised vehicular access” and parking arrangement for a previously approved house. Having considered the application, and the history applications on the site, and having inspected the site, I conclude that the “revised vehicular access” arrangement refers to the access route to the dwelling now proposed to run adjacent the southern and eastern boundary of Hawthorn Lodge, rather than through the site and within an arch/underpass of the building, as was permitted under 98/1026. I highlight that access arrangements to the public road are not affected.

I have no objection to the proposed internal access route and parking. I note a service road was permitted at this location as part of 98/1026. I consider the arrangement proposed for retention is a safer arrangement than routing traffic through the centre of Hawthorn Lodge. I do not consider that the potential for conflict from the permitted development (file reference no. 98/1026) and traffic egressing from this proposed revised development is significant; in fact I consider that the subject proposal would be a reduced risk to that of the permitted scheme. I drove the route and considered I had sufficient visibility. I note landscaping arrangements creating a narrowing arrangement at the junction with the initial part of the access road to the dwelling, and this naturally slows traffic.

In terms of amenity of Hawthorn Lodge, I note that there is no direct access from the rear of accommodation onto the location of the proposed access route. The more recently constructed block is securely fenced off. There appears to be one common access point to this area via steps, for access to bins. I acknowledge that it would be preferable to delineate the vehicular and pedestrian routes, in the interest of safety. However, I do not consider this issue so significant as to warrant refusal of permission. Furthermore, I do not consider it would be appropriate to seek this by way of condition (if the Commission is minded to grant permission) given the applicant has a right of way through, rather than owns, this area.

Retention permission for 3 parking spaces for the dwelling is sought. Drawings indicate a 2 bedroom dwelling. The GCDP car parking standard as per Table 15.5 is 1.5 spaces for a 1-3 bedroom dwelling. These are stated to be "The maximum quantum of car parking requirement". Therefore I consider that a maximum provision of 2 spaces is appropriate.

- 8.5. Use of dwelling: I note the position of the Planning Authority that the dwelling was approved as an ancillary caretaker's residence, in association with the adjoining Connemara Walking & Cycling accommodation centre and that it does not support retention of an ancillary unit on a specific/dedicated plot having regard to the planning history.

Taking the application as presented, permission has not been sought for any change of use, or for any modification/amendment to permission 97/1776 or 98/1026 in terms of occupancy/use of the dwelling. The application is for a) revised vehicular access and parking arrangement for a previously approved house and b) single storey extensions and other minor changes to the previously approved house. The matter of use/occupation of the dwelling is not, therefore, before the Commission.

Furthermore, the proposed development does not preclude use of the dwelling as a caretaker's residence.

- 8.6. Impact on parking provision of Hawthorn Lodge: I note the position of the PA that the proposed development "would if permitted, have potential to materially contravene

the parent permission on site under file reference no. 98/1026 from (inter alia) a parking provision perspective.”

An application can be legitimately made for development which is contrary to a parent permission and as such should be dealt with on its own merits.

The subject application results in a loss of c. 10 parking spaces. I am satisfied that the loss of 10 parking spaces is acceptable, firstly in the context of the permitted use under 97/1776 and 98/1026 as a walking and cycling centre, secondly in the context of the current use, which has low parking demand, and finally, having regard to the provisions of the GCDP, in particular DM Standard 31i) - expected modal shift away from the car at central locations (the site is c. 750m from the town centre), and Table 15.5, which adopts maximum car-parking standards

I highlight to the Commission that most of the parking area permitted under 98/1026 is already lost by the recent construction of a 2 storey block at this location, east of the crescent. This is a separate matter, and outside the subject development site.

Given the removal of 10 parking space associated with the subject development, I have considered the impact of same on the potential return to use of Hawthorn Lodge as tourist accommodation, and possible requirement for parking. If the additional block, its use, and the use of Hawthorn Lodge are in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations 2022 (Displaced Persons from Ukraine Temporary Protection) and that use ceases, the building will require to be removed, or regularised, in accordance with the Regulations, and parking provision intended at the location of that block may be addressed at this point. If those buildings and their use is unauthorised, this is a matter for the planning authority to pursue. I am therefore satisfied that the loss of 10 parking spaces is acceptable in relation to the permitted use of Hawthorn Lodge.

- 8.7. Design of extensions: I am satisfied that the design of the additions to the dwelling are consistent with its character and the provisions of the GCDP and do not detract from visual amenity or adjoining residential amenity, and satisfy DM Standard 4 of the GCDP. I note there were no objections by the planning authority to this aspect of the development.

- 8.8. Development Contributions: Note, application states floor area figure to be retained of 160.5sqm which appears to relate to entire dwelling. Drawings indicate that area of extensions is 32.3 sqm.

As per GCC Development Contribution Scheme, house extensions and domestic garages/sheds shall be exempt from Development Contributions.

9.0 AA Screening

I have considered the retention of the vehicular access/parking arrangements and extensions in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

The subject site is located in Clifden Co. Galway, c. 650m from Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex SAC, c. 1.6km from Connemara Bog Complex SAC and c. 3.16km Connemara Bog Complex SPA.

The proposed development comprises the retention of revised access and parking arrangements within a larger site, and the retention of small extensions to an existing dwelling house. 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 it could not have any effect on a European Site. The reason for this conclusion is the minor scale and the nature of works to be retained, the location of the site, distance from nearest European site and lack of connections, and taking into account screening comments of Galway County Council

I conclude, 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 (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive Screening

The subject site is located in Clifden Co. Galway, in the Bunnahowna_SC_010 sub catchment, c. 700m from Owenglin_030 surface waterbody, and within the Clifden Castlebar ground waterbody IE_WE_G_0017.

The proposed development comprises the retention of revised access and parking arrangements within a larger site, and the retention of small extensions to an existing dwelling house. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal.

I have assessed the revised access/parking arrangements and extensions 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 project, I am satisfied that it 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 minor scale and the nature of works to be retained, the location of the site, distance from nearest waterbodies and lack of hydrological connections.

I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will 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

11.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission be granted.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the zoning of the site and adjoining lands, and having regard to permitted and existing development/uses thereon, it is considered that the revised vehicular access and parking arrangements to serve the existing dwelling would be consistent with the zoning objective of the site to protect and improve residential amenities, would not prejudice the permitted use of the subject property or adjoining property and would not lead to traffic hazard. In addition, it is considered that the extensions to be retained do not detract from the character of the dwelling or amenities of property in the vicinity. The development would therefore, subject to conditions, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1	The development shall be retained in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted with the planning application except as may be otherwise required by the following conditions. Reason: To clarify the plans and particulars for which permission is granted.
2	A maximum of 2 No. parking spaces shall be provided to serve the dwelling. Reason: To accord with the car-parking policy of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

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

7th January 2026

Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	323373
Proposed Development Summary	a) Revised vehicular access and parking arrangement for a previously approved house and b) single storey extensions and other minor changes to existing house.
Development Address	Westport Road, Clifden, Co. Galway
	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. The extension is a project and will be considered further.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required. The vehicular access/parking arrangement is not a project and no further action is therefore 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 The extension is not Class specified in Part 1.	
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road	The extension is not Class specified in Part 1.

<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 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>	

Inspector: _____ Date: _____