



**Development**

Retention of log cabin for use as  
gym/office.

**Location**

Monavaddra, Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork

**Planning Authority**

Cork County Council

**Planning Authority Reg. Ref.**

25/5302

**Applicant**

Kenny McGarry

**Type of Application**

Permission

**Planning Authority Decision**

Refuse retention permission

**Type of Appeal**

First Party

**Appellants**

Kenny McGarry

**Observers**

Don Leahy & Aimee O'Riordan

**Date of Site Inspection**

3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2025

**Inspector**

Siobhan Carroll

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## **1.0 Site Location and Description**

- 1.1. The appeal site is located at Monavaddra, Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork. The village of Inchigeelagh which is located on the River Lee is situated approximately 4km to the north-east of the appeal site.
- 1.2. The site is situated in an upland land area to the east of Douce Mountain and it is at an elevation of roughly 150m. The surrounding area is predominantly forested with mature coniferous forest located immediately to the north, east and south of the appeal site.
- 1.3. The site has a stated area of 0.41 hectares contains a detached dormer dwelling with a floor area of circa 148sq m. The property is served by a gated vehicular entrance to the west. The roadside boundary of the property along its western side is formed by a low ranch style wooden fence with mature hedging to a height of circa 1.8m.

## **2.0 Proposed Development**

- 2.1. Permission is sought for the retention of a log cabin for use as a gym/office.

## **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

### **3.1. Decision**

- 3.1.1. Cork County Council decided to refuse retention permission by Order dated 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2025. Permission was refused for one reason.

1. The proposed development for retention of a Log Cabin, by reason of its visual prominence and scale, as well as being sited well forward of the existing dwelling's front building line, does not present as ancillary development, and is overly dominant. As a result, the structure competes visually with the dwelling, with finishes that are not harmonious with the existing vernacular styled dwelling, thus negatively impacting upon its character. As such, it is considered that the structure fails to integrate with

the existing dwelling and is imposing and incongruous as a result at its current siting. It would constitute an undesirable precedent for development of this nature, would seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, and is therefore contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

3.2.1. Planning Report: dated 25/8/2025 – It is stated in the report that whilst the principle of development ancillary to a dwelling is open to consideration the Planning Authority would have to be satisfied that any such structure is one that has an appearance and use as an ancillary structure. The scale of the proposed log cabin was highlighted at 56sq m which equates to 60% of the entire footprint of the existing dwelling. It was concluded that it has the appearance of a second dwelling unit rather than an ancillary development. It was considered that the proposed structure is prominent and forward of the dwelling by 2m and presents visually upon approach as a second dwelling given it has a footprint and scale that is akin to almost 2/3 of the footprint of the existing dwelling as well as finishes that are entirely different to the stone clad finish of the dwelling. A refusal of permission was recommended.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

3.2.3. Area Engineer – No objection subject to conditions.

### **3.3. Prescribed Bodies**

- None

### **3.4. Third Party Observations**

3.4.1. The Planning Authority did not receive any submissions/observations in relation to the planning application.

## **4.0 Planning History**

4.1.1. Reg. Ref. 12/630 – Permission was granted for retention of the dwelling on the site (change of plans from dwelling granted under 00/4076), revised site layout plan and

permission to construct detached garage. The permitted dwelling has a floor area of 148sq m and the permitted garage has a floor area of 56sq m.

4.1.2. Reg. Ref. 00/4076 – Permission was granted for the construction of a dwelling, septic tank and bored well.

## 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1. Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028

5.1.1. Chapter 8 refers to Economic Development

5.1.2. County Development Plan Objective EC: 8-7 Smart Working/Remote Working

- (a) Recognise and promote the need for remote working throughout the County, either from home or from a designated hub/co-working space, which offers employees flexible work arrangements and contributes to a lower carbon output through the associated reduction in commuting.
- (b) New designated working hubs/co-working spaces should generally be located within the settlement network, preferably on Town/Village Centre Sites and encourage the sustainable reuse of existing vacant buildings within town/village centres for such purposes.

5.1.3. Chapter 14 refers to Green Infrastructure and Recreation

5.1.4. County Development Plan Objective GI 14-9: Landscape

- (a) Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment.
- (b) Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land-use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability.
- (c) Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.
- (d) Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.

- (e) Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.

5.1.5. Chapter 16 refers to Built and Cultural Heritage

5.1.6. County Development Plan Objective HE 16-21: Design and Landscaping of New Buildings

- (a) Encourage new buildings that respect the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately into the landscape.
- (b) Promote sustainable approaches to housing development by encouraging new building projects to be energy efficient in their design and layout.
- (c) Foster an innovative approach to design that acknowledges the diversity of suitable design solutions in most cases, safeguards the potential for exceptional innovative design in appropriate locations and promotes the added economic, amenity and environmental value of good design.
- (d) Require the appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominantly indigenous/local species and groupings and protecting existing hedgerows and historic boundaries in rural areas. Protection of historical/commemorative trees will also be provided for.

## 5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

5.2.1. Bandon River SAC (Site Code 002171) is located circa 6.47km to the south of the appeal site.

5.2.2. The Gearagh SAC (Site Code 000108) is located approximately 10.7km to the north-east of the appeal site.

5.2.3. The Gearagh SPA (Site Code 004109) is located approximately 11.8km to the north-east of the appeal site.

5.2.4. Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC (Site Code 001873) is located circa 14.9km to the west of the appeal site.

### **5.3. EIA Screening**

5.3.1. The proposed development does not fall within a class of development set out in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001. No Mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is no requirement for a screening determination. (Refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 of the report)

## **6.0 The Appeal**

### **6.1. Grounds of Appeal**

A first party appeal was submitted by Kenny McGarry. The issues raised are as follows:

- The refusal reason issued by the Council cites concerns in relation to visual dominance, poor integration and competing finishes with the main house. It is stated that the assessment of the Planning Authority does not align with the actual site conditions.
- It is stated that the cabin is not visible to any neighbours, road users or third parties due to the extensive boundary hedging and the surrounding forestry. The cabin is positioned in a L-shape to the main dwelling. While the timber cabin is located beside the stone clad main dwelling it is considered that the contrast in finishes is harmonious. The area is rural therefore the cabin's finish has no visual impact on any streetscape or settlement pattern.
- Regarding the issue of ancillary use, the cabin has always served a non-residential ancillary purpose as a home gym and office. The applicant states that he and his wife have used the cabin for office purposes on the basis of both being full time remote workers.
- It is submitted that the building is modest in scale relative to the site and is subordinate in function to the main dwelling.
- It is considered that the proposed log cabin would align with national and local policy goals around remote working and rural economic activity, sustainable development and climate conscious commuting reduction and the use of

existing sites to maximise home based enterprise without expanding settlement boundaries.

- It is highlighted that there were no third party objections to the proposed development.
- It is submitted that the case should be considered on the basis of precedent and uniqueness. The site is not representative of general development conditions. The extreme remoteness, screening and forested surroundings mean this case is unique. The granting of retention would not establish a precedent for visually intrusive development elsewhere.
- The log cabin is entirely obscured from public view due to the 12-15 foot mature boundary hedging, the internal garden hedging, forestry over 40 feet in height located on three sides of the property and additional new forestry planting to the front.
- It is submitted that the log cabin does not impact any neighbouring properties.
- The market response to the sale of the property was that the owner received two offers above the asking price. The applicant considers that this reflects the fact that the cabin enhances the value and utility of the property.
- In conclusion, the applicant highlights the isolated and private nature of the property. The property is located in a remote upland setting, several kilometres from the closest village. It is accessed by a narrow, grass centred mountain road with no through traffic and no neighbouring dwellings within visible range.

## 6.2. Planning Authority Response

- Having regard to the submitted First Party Appeal documentation, and in particular the Land Registry Map submitted with same, it is noted that it does not align entirely with the Redline lands of the planning application, Ref. 25/5302. The latter indicates the location of the percolation area at the Southern boundary close to forestry which projects into same, and appears to be outside the legal interest. Whilst Land Title matters lie outside the remit of the Planning process and issues relating to title of the lands are ultimately

matters for resolution in the Courts, this matter is nonetheless highlighted as it appears that site services from the modular structure tie into that of the dwelling which is served by this percolation area. As a result, there is obscurity in respect of this matter. The latter is also highlighted in the Primary Assessment Report of 20/8/2025, at Section 11.2.2.

- It is considered that all other relevant issues have been covered in the technical reports forwarded to the Commission as part of the appeal.

### 6.3. Observations

An observation to the first party appeal was submitted by Dan Leahy and Aimee O'Riordan. The issues raised are as follows:

- The observers state that they are interested in purchasing the property.
- The subject log cabin will provide an office space for remote working. Having a home office located in a separate building to the main dwelling would allow a segregation between work and home. The log cabin would also provide a separate space for exercise in the gym.
- Given the size and layout of the main dwellinghouse if permission for the retention of the log cabin is refused the observers consider that working from home would not be a viable option for occupants of the main dwellinghouse.
- The log cabin would not generate any additional traffic within the area.
- The granting of retention of the log cabin will not lead to over development of the site as there will be only one dwelling and one ancillary unit on a site which extends to one acre and which can easily accommodated both structures without causing any interference to any neighbouring properties which in any event comprise exclusively of forestry.
- Pursuant to the Cork County Development planning permission sought for developments ancillary to the main use should be considered on their merits. It is the observers view that when the appeal is considered in its own particular circumstances including the unique nature of the property concerned (its remote woodland location and the nature of the surrounding forestry properties) the log cabin for use as a gym/office would not have a

negative impact on the amenities of the area, and the benefits which it would bring to the occupiers of the main house with regard to work/life balance and health and well being would be substantial.

- It is submitted that the log cabin blends in with the surroundings and is in keeping with the nature of the surrounding lands given that it is a wooden structure constructed in an area which is dominated by forestry (in fact the property is surrounded on three sides by forestry and there is circa 0.5 acres of forestry on the site itself).
- It is submitted that the visual impact of the log cabin is absolutely minimal given the size of the site and the fact that such is the hedging around the site and the substantial gate on site that the log cabin is not visible from the public road. Such is the central location of the log cabin on the substantial site that there is no possibility that it will interfere with the amenity of any surrounding properties (which in any event comprise entirely of forestry).
- Under Reg. Ref. 12/630 permission was granted for the construction on the site of a detached garage of similar size to the log cabin. The said garage was not constructed. The observers consider that this would allow for permission being granted for ancillary development of similar size to the log cabin in question at the property.
- The observers state that they would wish to purchase the property, however it will not be sufficient for their needs without the ancillary log cabin.

## 7.0 Assessment

Having examined the application details and all other documents 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 issue in this appeal to be considered is as follows:

- Nature of the development
- Design and Visual Amenity

## 7.1. Nature of the development

7.1.1. The Commission should note that this application relates to the retention of a structure to be used as a gym/office ancillary to the family home. The subject log cabin has an area of 56sq m. The first party outlined in the appeal that the structure has been in use as a home office with the applicant and his wife both working remotely on a permanent basis. It is submitted in the appeal that the proposed log cabin and its use as a home office would align with national and local policy goals around remote working and rural economic activity, sustainable development and climate conscious commuting reduction. County Development Plan Objective EC: 8-7 refers to Smart Working/Remote Working it recognises and promotes the need for remote working throughout the County, either from home or from a designated hub/co-working space, which offers employees flexible work arrangements and contributes to a lower carbon output through the associated reduction in commuting. Accordingly, I would accept the point raised by the appellant that there is relevant policy in the Development Plan which seeks to facilitate remote working.

7.1.2. The Planning Officer in their assessment of the proposal stated that while the principle of development ancillary to a dwelling is open to consideration the Planning Authority would have to be satisfied that any such structure is one that has an appearance and use as an ancillary structure.

7.1.3. The refusal reason issued by the Planning Authority refers to the siting of the log cabin and states that it does not present as ancillary development and that it is overly dominant. In relation to the scale of the proposed structure relative to the main dwelling the report of the Planning Officer highlighted that the log cabin has an area of 56sq m which equates to 60% of the entire footprint of the existing dwelling which has a floor area 148sq m. It was concluded that it has the appearance of a second dwelling unit rather than an ancillary development.

7.1.4. Regarding the use of the structure, I note that the report of the Planning Officer refers to the potential which a unit of 56sq m could have to provide residential accommodation which would be beyond ancillary. The report also referred to the information provided online in relation to the sale of the property which stated that the structure consists of a large open kitchen/lounge/gym area, two offices and bathroom. The floor plans as submitted with the application indicates an office, gym

and shower room. The use of the structure as proposed and indicated on the submitted plans would be ancillary to the use of the main dwelling, however I would note the concern of the Planning Authority in relation to the scale of the structure relative to the main dwelling.

## **7.2. Design and Visual Amenity**

- 7.2.1. The refusal issued by the Planning Authority primarily refers to the visual prominence, scale and design of the subject log cabin. It is set out in the reason for refusal that the log cabin is set forward of the existing dwelling's front building line, does not present as ancillary development, and is overly dominant. In relation to the siting of the log cabin relative to the existing dwelling it is stated in the refusal reason that finishes that are not harmonious with the existing vernacular styled dwelling, and therefore negatively impacting upon its character. It was concluded in the refusal reason that the structure fails to integrate with the existing dwelling and is imposing and incongruous as a result at its current siting.
- 7.2.2. In response to these matters, it is stated in the appeal that the cabin is positioned in a L-shape to the main dwelling. Regarding the timber fabrication of the structure the first party stated that while the timber cabin is located beside the main dwelling which has a stone clad finish, they considered that the contrast in finishes is harmonious. They submit that the subject log cabin has no visual impact on any streetscape or settlement pattern. Regarding the size of the proposed cabin the first party submit that it is modest in scale relative to the site and is subordinate in function to the main dwelling.
- 7.2.3. The first party requests that the case be considered on the basis of precedent and uniqueness. They submit that the extreme remoteness, screening and forested surroundings mean the case is unique. In relation to the site context, they highlighted that the site is bounded by forestry to the north, south and east and the boundary hedging and the internal garden hedging on the site were referred to.
- 7.2.4. The observers to the appeal provided an endorsement of the proposed development. They stated that they wish to purchase the property on the basis that the subject log cabin would be permitted and that it would therefore be available to use as a home office and gym. The observers also highlighted the site's location, and they consider

that the proposed log cabin is in keeping with the nature of the surrounding lands given that it is a wooden structure located in an area which is dominated by forestry. The observers referred to Reg. Ref. 12/630 under which permission was granted for retention of the dwelling on the site (change of plans from dwelling granted under 00/4076), revised site layout plan and permission to construct detached garage. They highlighted that the permitted garage was not constructed and that the permission for the garage on the site should be considered comparable to the subject log cabin. In relation to the garage permitted under Reg. Ref. 12/630, I would note that it has a comparable floor area of 56sq m, however as indicated on the Site Layout Plan with the application the garage was proposed to be sited to the north-east of the dwelling and setback behind the rear building line of the dwelling. Therefore, the siting of the subject log cabin is not directly comparable to the permitted garage.

- 7.2.5. In relation to the site context, I note the points made by the first party and the observers regarding the proximity of forestry and also the existing boundary treatment on the site. The matter of visual amenity, I consider both refers to the wider site context as well as the context of the site itself. While I would accept that site is screened from long range views, the existing property and subject log cabin are visible from the adjoining public road notwithstanding the boundary planting.
- 7.2.6. I consider that the following objectives of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 are relevant to the assessment of the proposal. County Development Plan Objective GI 14-9: refers to Landscape and part (a) seeks to protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment. County Development Plan Objective HE 16-21: refers to Design and Landscaping of New Buildings and part (a) seeks to encourage new buildings that respect the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately into the landscape.
- 7.2.7. The subject log cabin is located 1.9m to the north of the dwelling and it set forward 2m from the front building line of the dwelling. The external finish of the log cabin is of timber fabrication and as such it does not integrate with the vernacular styled dwelling which features a stone clad external finish to the front elevation. Having regard to the location of the proposed log cabin relative to the existing dwelling and its design and scale, I would concur with the assessment of the Planning Authority

that it does not have the appearance of an ancillary structure but rather as a separate dwelling unit. Regarding the appearance of the log cabin relative to that of the existing dwelling I would also concur with the assessment of the Planning Authority that it fails to integrate with the existing dwelling and is imposing and incongruous as a result at its current siting and that it therefore negatively impacts upon the character of the existing dwelling. On that basis I would conclude that the development would be contrary to Development Plan Objective GI14-9 which refers to Landscape and specifically part (a) which seeks to protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork's built and natural environment and also Development Plan Objective HE 16-2 which refers to Design and Landscaping of New Buildings and specifically part (a) which seeks to encourage new buildings that respect the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately into the landscape.

## 8.0 AA Screening

- 8.1. I have considered the proposed light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.
- 8.2. The proposed development comprises retention of a log cabin (56sq m). The subject site is not located within or directly adjacent to any European Site. Bandon River SAC (Site Code 002171) is located circa 6.47km to the south of the appeal site. The Gearagh SAC (Site Code 000108) is located approximately 10.7km to the north-east of the appeal site. The Gearagh SPA (Site Code 004109) is located approximately 11.8km to the north-east of the appeal site. Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC (Site Code 001873) is located circa 14.9km to the west of the appeal site.
- 8.3. 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:
  - Nature of works e.g. small scale and nature of the development;
  - The distance from the nearest European site and lack of connections; and
  - Taking into account screening report/determination by Cork County Council.

8.4. 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.

## 9.0 Water Framework Directive

9.1. The subject site is located at Monavaddra, Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork. It is situated in an upland land area to the east of Douce Mountain and approximately 4km to the south-west of the village of Inchigeelagh. A tributary stream of the River Lee (Lee (Cork)\_030) is located 330m to the north of the appeal site. Lough Allua (IE\_SW\_19\_4) is located 2km to the north of the appeal site. The ground waterbody Ballinhassig West (Code IE\_SW\_G\_005) underlies the site.

9.2. The proposal comprises the retention of a log cabin for use as a gym/office on a 0.41 hectare site, at Monavaddra, Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork. The grounds of appeal have not raised the matter of the Water Framework Directive.

9.3. I have assessed the proposed development 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 waterbodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

9.4. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- The nature and small scale of the development.

### Conclusion

9.5. 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 jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

## **10.0 Recommendation**

10.1.1. I recommend that retention permission is refused for the following reasons and considerations.

## 11.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the siting, design and scale of the development to be retained and specifically the siting of the log cabin forward of the existing dwelling's front building line, it is considered that the development does not have the appearance of an ancillary structure but rather as a separate dwelling unit. As a result, the structure competes visually with the dwelling, with finishes that are not harmonious with the existing vernacular styled dwelling, thus negatively impacting upon its character. Therefore, it is considered that the structure fails to integrate with the existing dwelling and is imposing and incongruous as a result at its current siting. Accordingly, it is considered that the development would be contrary to County Development Plan Objectives GI14-9(a) and HE 16-21(a) of the Cork County Development Plan 2022- 2028. The development would, therefore, seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

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Siobhan Carroll  
Planning Inspector

24<sup>th</sup> of December 2025

## Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

<b>Case Reference</b>	ACP 323615-25
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	Retention of log cabin for use as gym/office
<b>Development Address</b>	Monavaddra, Inchigeelagh, Co. Cork
<b>In all cases check box /or leave blank</b>	
<b>1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?</b>  (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.
<b>2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.  <b>EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.</b>	State the Class here
<input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
<b>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?</b>	
<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	

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

<p><b>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)?</b></p>	
<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)</b></p>
<p><b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)</b></p>

Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_