



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

PL-500016-GC

Development	Retention of the widening of the vehicular access and the provision of off-street car parking space in lieu of the front lawn area and all ancillary site works.
Location	62 Castlelawn Heights, Headford Road Galway.
Planning Authority	Galway City Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2560215
Applicant(s)	Daryl Hanley
Type of Application	Retention.
Planning Authority Decision	To Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant	Daryl Hanley
Observer(s)	None.
Date of Site Inspection	November 22 nd , 2025
Inspector	Breda Gannon.

1.0 Site Location and Description

1.1 The site is located at No 62 Castlilawn Heights, Headford Road. Galway. It accommodates a two-storey semi-detached dwelling on a site with a stated area of 0.019 sq.m. The front boundary wall has been removed across the site frontage and the garden area has been replaced with a hard surfaced area, finished in tarmac. The area provides onsite parking space for 2 no. cars.

The area is residential in character and is part of the established suburbs, located northeast of the city centre.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1 The development as described in the public notices submitted with the application seeks the retention of a widened vehicular entrance and the provision of off-street carparking, in lieu of the front lawn area at the front of the existing dwelling. The widened access is stated to be 5.05m wide, with two small sections of wall (width of 0.9m and 0.6m) retained on either side. The entire area is dedicated to car parking.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1 Decision

The planning authority decided to refuse permission for the retention of the development on the grounds that the widening of the vehicular access and the provision of off street carparking on the site, in lieu of the existing front lawn area, exceeds the maximum vehicular entrance width and would not comply with the front garden landscaping requirements stipulated under Section 11.3.1 (g) of the development plan. The development would therefore contravene the development standards of the development plan and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.1.2. Planning Authority Reports

The planning officer's report of 8th of September 2025 notes that the front vehicular entrance width is 5.05m and the overall boundary width is 7.161m. The entrance is

therefore 70% wider than the width of the front boundary and therefore exceeds the 50% threshold stipulated under Section 11.3.1 (g) Car Parking Standards of the development plan.

3.1.3 Other Technical Reports

None

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

None

3.4. Third Party Observations

None.

4.0 Planning History

4.1 The planning officer notes that there is no recent planning history relating to the site. The original planning permissions for Castlilawn Heights are Reg. Ref No's 74/140 and 77/268.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1 Development Plan

The operative development plan is the **Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**.

The site is located within the 'Established Suburbs' to the northeast of the city centre. The site is located in an area zoned R 'Residential' with the following objective:

'To provide for residential development and for associated support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods'.

Development Standards and Guidelines for Residential Development are set out in Section 11.3 of the development plan. The following is relevant:

11.3.1(g) Car Parking Standards.

Where onsite car-parking space is to be provided in the front garden the following standards shall apply:

- The car parking space shall be 2.5m x 5m minimum.
- The vehicular entrance shall not normally exceed 3m in width, or where the local context and pattern of development allows, not wider than 50 per cent of the width of the front boundary.
- Where feasible the maximum extent of the boundary wall/hedging shall be retained.
- Where gates are provided they shall not open outwards.
- Front gardens shall not be completely dedicated to car parking. The balance of space shall be suitably landscaped.

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

The site is not located within or proximate to a European site. The closest European sites are as follows:

- Lough Corrib SAC (Site code 000297), c1km to the south and west, selected for a diverse range of habitats and species.
- Lough Corrib SPA (Site code 004042), c. 2.5km to the northwest, selected for a wide variety wintering waterbirds and wetlands.

6.0 EIA Screening

The development is not of 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. 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 this report.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1 Grounds of Appeal

- The existing dwelling is occupied by the applicant and his partner.
- When the original development at this location was developed around 1975 there was no definite stipulation in relation to the widths of entrances.
- A considerable number of nearby dwellings have carried out similar works to provide additional off street carparking.
- In recent times the estate has been used for rental purposes and this has increased the need for additional carparking.
- The overall width of the site is approximately 7.161m and the applicant now proposes to retain a 3.6m wide entrance to coincide with the original start/end of the drop kerbs that currently exist.
- It is also proposed to remove the tarmac that has been provided between the road and the footpath and reinstate this to its former condition.
- It is also proposed to provide a strip of c 1 meter in width running from the existing front entrance back to the dwelling. The tarmac would be removed from this area and it would be planted.
- All of the remaining blockwork that exists to the front of the site would be plastered and capped.
- The proposal being put to An Coimisiún Pleanála is to grant a vehicular entrance not exceeding 3.6m in width, which would be close to 50% of the width of the front boundary. It is considered that this is a reasonable compromise from that which is currently sought.

7.3. Planning Authority Response

No response to the grounds of appeal were submitted by the planning authority.

8.0 Assessment

Having examined all 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 its environs, and having regard to the relevant local policies and guidance, I consider the substantive issues to be considered are those raised in the appeal.

The appellant has removed the boundary wall at the front of the existing house and installed a hard surfaced area extending from the front building line to the edge of the footpath to provide off-street car parking space for 2 no. cars. The front garden area has been completely removed.

The original layout of the houses in the estate provided a small front lawn defined by a front boundary wall and sufficient space for one parked car. The estate was developed in the late 1970's early 1980's when car ownership was significantly less than it is now and an increase in properties for rent potentially increases the demand for car parking space. This has resulted in the removal of front boundary walls and lawn areas and replacement with a hard surfaced area suitable for parking 2 no. cars at a significant number of properties, included those in the vicinity of the appeal site. This detracts from the visual and residential amenities of the estate.

Section 11.3.1(g) of the development plan sets out the standards that apply where car parking is to be provided at the front of the dwelling. While it permits a degree of flexibility in terms of the overall width of the vehicular entrance, depending on local circumstances, the maximum permitted width is 50% of the site frontage. It is a stated requirement that front gardens shall not be completely dedicated to car parking.

The appeal submission proposes a vehicular width of 3.6m which is circa 50% of the site frontage. The provision of an access of this width would not appear to be significantly out of conformity with the original layout where circa half of the front area of the house was dedicated to car parking and the remainder forming a lawn area. However, notwithstanding the proposal to provide a 1m landscaped strip the majority of the area to the front of the house would remain dedicated to carparking,

with no front garden, which would be contrary to the provisions of the development plan. While I accept that a significant number of properties, both in the immediate area and throughout the estate have carried out similar alterations, this is contrary to the provisions of the development plan and has a negative impact on the overall amenity of the housing scheme. I would conclude that An Coimisiún uphold the decision of the planning authority and refuse permission for the retention of the development.

9.0 AA Screening

I have considered the proposal to retain the widening of the vehicular access and provision of on-site parking in front of the existing dwelling in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

The subject site is located at 62 Castlilawn Heights, Headford Road, Galway. It is located c1km north and east of Lough Corrib SAC (Site code 000297), selected for a diverse range of habitats and species. The site is also c 2.5km southeast of Lough Corrib SPA (Site code 004042), selected for a wide variety of wintering waterbirds and for wetlands. No nature conservation issues have been raised in the appeal.

Having regard to the built nature of the site, the limited scale of development, the surrounding pattern of development and intervening uses, I consider that significant effects on habitats, species and foraging wintering birds can be discounted.

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 as follows.

- the limited scale and nature of the development and its location within a built up area connected to existing public services,
- the distance from the nearest European sites, and
- lack of connections.

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.

10.0 Water Frame Directive

The proposal is to retain a widened vehicular access and off-street parking at the front of an existing house at 62 Castlelawn Heights, Headford Road. Galway.

No water deterioration concerns were raised in the appeal. There are no water bodies close to the site.

I have assessed the 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 and ground waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and 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 water 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 separation distance from the nearest Water Bodies and lack of hydrological connections.

Conclusion

I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration of 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

On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that permission be refused for the retention of the development for the reasons and considerations set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Notwithstanding the proposal to provide a 1m landscaped strip at the front of the dwelling, it is considered that the development proposed to be retained would result in the loss of a suitable adequately sized landscaped garden space at the front of the dwelling, and the area being almost completely dedicated to car parking, which would be contrary to the standards for car parking in front gardens set out in Section 11.3.1 (g) of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029. The proposal if permitted would result in negative impacts on the amenity of the dwelling and the overall housing scheme and create a precedent for similar development, which would 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.

Breda Gannon
Planning Inspector

11th, December 2025

Appendix A: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-500016
Proposed Development Summary	Retention of the widening of the vehicular access and the provision of off-street car parking space in lieu of the front lawn area and all ancillary site works.
Development Address	62 Castlelawn Heights, Headford Road 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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required.
<p>(For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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) 	
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in <u>Part 1</u>, 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 <u>Part 2</u>, 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 development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	
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: _____