



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-500073-CW

Development	Construct 2 no. 2 storey houses and all associated works
Location	Pollerton Little , Dublin Road , Carlow
Planning Authority	Carlow County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2460325
Applicant(s)	Desmond O'Reilly & Michael O'Reilly
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission + Conditions
Type of Appeal	Third Party Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	Desmond O'Reilly & Michael O'Reilly
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	7 th of January 2026
Inspector	Caryn Coogan

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Appendix 1 – Form 1: EIA Pre-Screening, Form 2 EIA Screening

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site, is **0.565 Ha**, is located in the townland of Pollerton Little, on the Dublin Road in Carlow town.
- 1.2. The Dublin Road is a Regional Road, R448, linking Carlow town to the M9 motorway and the N80. The site is located at a roundabout on the R448 serving residential developments, community facilities and commercial developments. South of the roundabout is a retail park which includes *EZ Living furniture* sales opposite the subject site. To the north of the site is a residential housing estate, Castle Oaks, and north-west is a multistorey, Sue Ryder complex and further west is Bolands Car sales Carlow.
- 1.3. The site is rectangular and level in configuration. It is positioned on the northern side of the Dublin Road alongside a roundabout. The Dublin Road, R448 forms the southern site boundary with a 2m footpath and public lighting. The access road off the roundabout forms the western site boundary with a 2m footpath running along the full boundary of the site. The northern site boundary is another road which is a cul de sac providing access to the site, Castle Oaks residential estate, and greenfield lands to the east. The northern site boundary also boast a 2m footpath along the full width of the boundary. The eastern site boundary is a field boundary with a mature hedgerow along the common boundary.
- 1.4. The northern boundary is tree lined. The site is unkempt and used to graze horses.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development is planning permission to construct 2No. two storey dwellinghouses, 2No. detached garages, 2No. entrances (and pedestrian accesses) boundary landscaping and walls, connection to existing services and all associated site development works.
- 2.2. The gross floor area of the proposed development is 713sq.m.
- 2.3. The site layout drawing (scale 1:500) indicates two large dwellings addressing the southern, Dublin Road, with a considerable setback to the rear site boundary. Each dwelling has an individual access point off the northern cul de sac. There are two detached garages setback considerably from the dwellings located near the northern

site boundary with their own access road separate to the dwellings. There are also two pedestrian accesses proposed off the Dublin Road to the front of each dwelling.

3.0 **Planning Authority Decision**

3.1. **Decision**

Carlow Co.Co. decided to grant planning permission for the development subject to 16No. standard planning conditions.

3.2. **Planning Authority Reports**

3.2.1. **Planning Reports**

- AA Screening Report is not required;
- A robust summary of the third party submissions was provided.
- The proposed site layout and configuration is unacceptable; Further information is recommended for a revised design to include the design to compliment its surroundings, the two dwellings are to be centred on each plot, maximum height of 8.5m and reduce the footprint of the garages. In addition, submit a landscaping scheme, and boundary treatment proposal. The assessment of the case related to mainly outstanding design and layout issues.
- Following receipt of the further information the planning officer was satisfied with the revised designs and recommended planning permission.

3.2.2. **Other Technical Reports**

- Environment Section : No objection
- Area Engineer: No objection

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

There were no submissions from prescribed bodies.

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

There were a number of third party (14No.) objections/ observations received by the planning authority during the statutory period citing the following concerns:

- Two dwellings does not meet with national and regional planning policies or the local development plan;
- The proposed density is too low and does not comply with suburban areas within the range of 30-50 dwellings/ hectare on suburban lands in key towns
- Site is zoned 'New Residential' and this zoning is to provide 1,090 units within the plan period.
- Site is located at the entrance of a key town with excellent infrastructure and beside a bus stop
- Poor visual impact at a prime location
- It does not promote compact growth
- Removal of trees and replacement with a block wall is unacceptable
- Contrary to basic urban design principles
- Negative impact on housing estate character

4.0 **Planning History**

4.1 ***Planning Reference 04/592***

Planning permission granted for the demolition of 1- 2-storey dwelling, garage & ancillary office the construction of 260 No. dwellings consisting of 12 No. 5 bed d/t dwellings, 27 -No.4 d/t dwellings, 1 - relocated d/t dwelling with ancillary office building, 10 No. 4 bed dwellings in terraced format 10No.-3 bed dwellings in semi-detached & terraced format; total of 36 No. apts comprising 3. 3-storey apt blocks consisting of 12 -No.2-bed apts each construction of 1 – 2 storey commercial building consisting of 1 ground floor creche (549m²) with playground and 1 medical centre (435m²) on first floor construction of 2-storey local neighbourhood centre consisting of bar 1 -convenience outlet (275m²) 3 - retail service units & standalone 1-storey restaurant (443m²), the construction of 56 bed 2-storey guesthouse/travel lodge

(2737m²) construction of a new roundabout on the N9 signage bus stop cycleways & car park the culverting of the Askea Stream for a distance of 150m attenuation pond the relocation of existing 38kv overhead ESB line.

4.2 There were subsequent planning permissions granted for a number of changes to the parent permission granted under planning reference 04/592, under planning references PL06/418, PL07/360, and PL 07/472.

4.3 ***Planning Ref: 09394***

Planning permission granted to extend duration of planning permission 04/592 in terms of Section 42 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

4.4 ***Planning Ref: 10/338***

Planning permission granted for the erection of 7 no. fully serviced 2 storey dwelling houses (5 no. detached and 2 no. semidetached dwelling houses) together with all ancillary services and associated site works

4.5 ***Planning Ref. 15/28***

Planning permission granted to extend the permission granted under 04/592 and as extended by 09/394 for a mixed residential/commercial development; "Demolition of 1 - 2-storey dwelling, garage & ancillary office, the construction of 260 houses consisting of 12-5 bed d/t dwellings, 27- 4d/t dwellings, 1- relocated d/t dwelling with ancillary office building, 10-4-bed dwellings in terraced format, 210 - 3-bed dwellings in semi-detached and terraced format; total of 36 apartments comprising 3.3-storey apartment blocks consisting of 12-2-bed apts each, construction of 1-2-storey commercial building consisting of 1 ground floor creche (549m) with playground and 1 medical centre (435m) on first floor, construction of 2-storey local neighbourhood centre consisting of bar, 1 convenience outlet (275m), 3-retail service units & standalone 1-storey restaurant (443m), the construction of 56-bed 2-storey guesthouse/travel lodge (2737m), construction of a new roundabout on the N9, signage, bus stop, cycleways & car park, the culverting of the Askea stream for a distance of 150m, attenuation pond, the relocation of existing 38kv overhead ESB line.

4.6 ***Planning Ref: 16/196***

Planning permission granted for the proposed erection of 7 no. fully serviced 2 storey dwelling houses (5 no. detached and 2 no. semi detached dwelling houses) together with all ancillary services and associated site works.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

5.1.1 Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

3.8 Densities / Increased Heights

The ‘Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas’ Guidelines and accompanying ‘Urban Design Manual’ and Circular Letter NRUP 02/2021 outline recommendations regarding appropriate densities for different contexts based on site factors and the level of access to services and facilities, including transport.

Having regard to the settlement hierarchy, provision of higher densities (35 units per ha or more) are most appropriate within Carlow Town Centre and regeneration sites proximate to the public transport network subject to good design and development management standards being met.

Where higher densities are being considered this is likely to give rise to an increased building height which should be informed by The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines published in 2018. Buildings of increased height should be appropriately located, of high-quality design and designed to protect and enhance the existing streetscape and heritage characteristics of the area. (Ref: Section 12.8.8 and Policy DN P6).

Carlow Town	>35ha	25-30*ha
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Table 3.3: Indicative Net Densities Tier 1-3 Settlements

* Densities in excess of 30 units per ha may be considered on appropriate edge of centre sites in Carlow, Tullow and Muine Bheag subject to high quality design and layout.

5.1.2 The relevant development plan is the ***Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030***.

Chapter 3 Core Strategy and Housing

Aim: *To direct and facilitate appropriate and sustainable levels of growth and development throughout Carlow-Graiguecullen over the period 2024-2030, with a focus on compact growth, urban regeneration, sustainable travel, and healthy placemaking, in accordance with the Core Strategies contained in the Carlow County Development Plan and the Laois County Development Plan.*

3.2.1 Carlow Town and Environs The Core Strategy (Table 2.7) in the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 provides a projected population increase for Carlow Town (including Carlow Environs) by 2028 of 3,107 people. The housing target to accommodate this population growth is identified as 1,330 units, 900 of which are allocated to the former Carlow Town Council area. The allocation of 900 units was arrived at following an analysis of the potential residential capacity of appropriate infill, brownfield, consolidation and strategic lands and sites in the existing built-up footprint of the former Town Council area. Overall, the total figure of 1,300 units represents an allocation of 42.8% of the projected housing target for County Carlow to Carlow Town (including Carlow Town Environs).

Applying the Core Strategy housing unit target figure of 1,330 units to the JULAP results in a projected requirement of 444 units on the base line figure over the two year period beyond the County Development plan period. In conjunction the application of the additional provision per the Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities and the Core Strategy of the Carlow County Development Plan (Table 2.7) results in an additional allocation of 444 units (See Table 3.2).

The quantum of 'New Residential' zoned land in Carlow Town Environs is circa 34 hectares. This 'New Residential' zoned land can deliver an estimated 1,020 units, utilising a maximum density of units per hectare in accordance with Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities - January 2024. It is considered that there is sufficient zoned land in the

environs area to meet the housing target figure of 1,017 units, taking account of the combined development potential of 'New Residential' zoned lands with lands zoned 'Existing/Infill Residential' and 'Commercial/Residential'.

3.3 Compliance with Core Strategies

In order to align with the NPF, the RSES' and the Core Strategies, Carlow County Council and Laois County Council will utilise all policy avenues available to ensure the optimum delivery of residential units, ensuring a focus on compact growth and providing housing within the built-up area. Provision of housing will also focus on creation of successful, well designed, and sustainable communities where new development successfully integrates with existing communities. The quantum of land zoned 'New Residential' in the joint urban area has been based on applying estimated densities per hectare. It should be noted that any planning application for residential development on these lands shall have regard to Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH (2024). In addition, the density of development proposal and number of units permissible will be determined at detailed design stage based on a full assessment of site characteristics, local conditions, design sensitivities and the overall quality of the scheme, and having regard to the development management standards in the Carlow County Development Plan and Laois County Development Plan, along with the relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines.

5.2 National Planning Policies and Guidelines

5.2.1 The National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018 sets out a high-level strategy for the planning and development of Ireland to 2040. The NPF forecasts that Ireland will continue to experience population growth above the EU average over the next 20 years, with an expected increase of around one million people above 2016 levels by 2040. The strategy to accommodate this growth in a sustainable way focuses on 10 national strategic outcomes that include Compact Growth, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Amenity and Heritage, a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society and the Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and Environmental Resources.

Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) on the 8th of April 2025. In essence, the Revised NPF introduces the need to plan for a population of between 6.1 to 6.3 million people by 2040, and plan for approximately 50,000 units per annum over that period, to meet additional population and employment growth over and above the original 2018 NPF projections. This reflects the latest research and modelling by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which forecasts substantial population growth over the next decade. The Revised NPF, with the subsequent provision of updated planned housing requirements at a local authority level, aims to ensure that housing supply meets both new demand and addresses existing need, creating a sustainable future for housing in Ireland.

5.2.2 **National Planning Framework First Revision April 2025**

Compact Growth Targeting a greater proportion (40%) of future housing development to be within and close to the existing footprint of built-up areas.

National Policy Objective 7 Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth.

5.2.3 **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2024**

The NPF priorities for compact growth include an emphasis on the renewal of existing settlements, rather than continued sprawl. This priority recognises the impacts that our dispersed settlement pattern (including the dispersal of residential, commercial and employment uses within settlements) is having on people, the economy and the environment. In particular, there is a recognition that dispersed settlement patterns are contributing to the social, economic and physical decline of the central parts of many of our cities and towns, as population and activities move out. There is a recognition that dispersed settlement patterns create a demand for travel and embed a reliance on carbon intensive private car travel and long commutes that affect quality of life for many citizens.

Policy and Objective 3.1 It is a policy and objective of these Guidelines that the recommended residential density ranges set out in Section 3.3 are applied within statutory development plans and in the consideration of individual planning

applications, and that these density ranges are refined further at a local level using the criteria set out in Section 3.4 where appropriate.

5.2.4 **Urban Design Manual – a Best Practice Guide** issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009).

Ensuring quality and sustainability in the physical form of towns and villages by ensuring that they are successful and vital places.

5.2.5 **Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23)**

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the first plan to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in 2022. The plan implements these carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. Of particular relevance to these Guidelines, CAP23 notes that the dispersal of residential settlements, commercial zones and workplaces to peripheral areas instead of focusing on central areas and locations served by public transport, has led to an overreliance on the private car. The Annex of Actions to CAP23 includes an action to prepare sustainable settlement guidelines and to review planning guidelines to ensure a graduated approach in relation to the provision of car parking.

5.2.6 **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets**

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) was published in 2013 (updated 2019) by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. It sets out design guidance for new and existing urban roads and streets in Ireland, incorporating good planning and design practice.

5.3 **Water Framework Directive**

The European Union Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) was adopted in 2000 as a single piece of legislation covering rivers, lakes, groundwater and transitional (estuarine) and coastal waters and includes heavily modified and artificial waterbodies. The overarching aim of the WFD is to prevent further deterioration of and to protect, enhance and restore the status of all bodies of water with the aim of

achieving at least 'good' ecological status by 2015 (or where certain derogations have been justified to 2021 or 2027). 5.3.2. The site is located within the River 5.3.3. The nearest river waterbody to the site is.

5.4 Natural Heritage Designations

5.4.1 The subject site is located c. 1.96km east of the nearest European site, i.e. River Barrow and River Nore SAC site code: 002162.

5.4.2. The proposed development is located within an established suburban area and comprises the construction of 2 dwellings and all other ancillary works. There will be a connection to the public sewerage network. There are no watercourses linking the site with any such designated areas.

5.4.3 The Askea Stream located 194m west of the site has been culverted.

5.5 EIA Screening

5.5.1 The proposed development 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.

5.5.2. EIA Pre-Screening is attached as Appendix 1 and EIA Preliminary Examination is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1 The first third party appeal has been brought Anne O'Reilly, 13 The Crescent, Castle Oaks, Pollerton Little. A summary of the relevant planning issues is

- The proposal of two dwellings does not meet the aspirations and objectives for compact growth included in the National Planning Framework,

the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and the development plan for Carlow.

- The proposal is for the construction of two houses on a site 0.565Ha at the entrance to Carlow resulting in a density of only 3.5 units per hectare.
- By virtue of the houses facing onto the main regional road, their orientation (their back onto the estate) and location in close proximity to the road, it does not compliment the entrance into Carlow town or the estate.

6.1.2 Policy Context

- Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities
- Section 3.3 of the Guidelines are provided for in Key Towns with a population of 5000 plus falls within the designation for the policy as set out:

Suburban areas are the low density car orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of the town, while urban extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint area that are zoned for residential or mixed use development. It is a policy and an objective of these Guidelines that residential densities range 30 dph to 50 dph (net) shall apply at suburban and urban extension locations of Key Towns and Large Towns, and that densities of up to 80 dph shall be open for consideration at accessible suburban/ urban locations.

- Carlow/ Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan (JULAP) 2024-2029
- **Core Strategy** The land is zoned 'New Residential' and accordingly the land has now become key residential lands required for Carlow's Town's growth in order to give effect to the objectives set out in the Compact Settlement Guidelines. *As referred to in Section 3.2.1, the current Carlow County Development Plan Core Strategy has allocated 900 units to the former Town Council area, taking account of 29% of the residential land capacity in the existing built-up footprint and providing for increased densities an estimated 1,090 units are deliverable within the former town council area. This results in a remaining housing target for the Carlow Town Environs area of 1,017 units (i.e. 2,107 less 900). The quantum of 'New Residential' zoned land in Carlow Town Environs is circa 34 hectares. This 'New Residential' zoned land can*

deliver an estimated 1,020 units, utilising a maximum density of units per hectare in accordance with Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities - January 2024.

Accordingly the extent of the land zoned residential in the plan is to provide adequate capacity to meet target population growth within the plan boundary was arrived at through the Core Strategy for Carlow using a density of 30 units per Ha.

- **Housing Objectives** The JULAP sets out the following objectives for the site: Plan Policy related to the residential zoning: Chapter 12 Objectives. Support the intensification of development on lands in the joint urban area, such as land adjacent or close to public transport nodes and corridors and which would contribute to the minimisation of trip generation and distribution.
- Adequate land was identified in the plan to provide for the future projected growth of Carlow town. The subject lands at Castle Oaks was designated CW11 and in the accompanying Infrastructure Assessment was identified as Tier 1. There is service capacity available.
- Policy Conclusion: As a result of the rezoning of land to New Residential in the JULAP 2024 the site has now become essential for the compact growth as envisaged in the Compact Settlement Guidelines and targets set out in the Core Strategy. The site being .5Ha in extent and located within close proximity to a bus route can provide for at least 15units.
- Carlow Planning Assessment: The planning assessment did not adequately assess the context of the site. It merely stated a dwelling is a use permitted under the zoning objective. The assessment did not deal with designation CW11 in the JULAP and it will be required to substantially contribute towards housing targets set out in the Core Strategy. The planning authority's decision is incomplete.
- Location at Entrance to the town: The residents of Castle Oaks bought into the estate based on its being sold as an existing new village concept, with a neighbourhood centre, creche, local hotel and other village facilities on their doorstep. The site was provide a counterbalance to the as constructed large retail buildings opposite at the Four Lakes business park, creating enclosure

around the roundabout and a 'sense of arrival' into Carlow. When compared with the as constructed Retail park across the main road, the proposed two houses will contribute towards a sense of place. As such the proposal for density of two houses does not adequately contribute towards the objective for urban placemaking as defined in the guidelines and in fact compromise the future potential for comprehensive design which would complement not just the estate behind, but also the town entrance.

- Impact on Estate Character : The sites in the estate were laid out under a single permission. The block wall will require the removal of the existing trees (planted approximately 19 years ago) which is not acceptable. The block wall in combination with the rear wall at the site entrances will 'sterilise' the entrance and contribute towards a 'walled tunnel' effect up the side road which will sterilise the entrance and contribute towards a walled tunnel effect up the side road which will eventually detract from future development lands adjacent. Ill conceived pedestrian entrances.
- Conclusion: The proposal does not reflect the land's development potential. It was not assessed properly by the planning authority, in accordance with the development plan or government guidelines on residential estates. The site is designated in the infrastructure assessment of Carlow/ Graiguecullen Joint LAP 2024 as Tier 1 site (CW11) as such must comply with the prevailing policy.

6.1.3 The second third party appeal has been taken by Mr. Dan O'Connor of 38 The Crescent, Castle Oaks, Carlow. He raises similar concerns to Ms Anne O'Reilly. I will try to avoid undue repetition in the summary of his grounds of appeal.

- Background: The proposed development is located on a large vacant site at an Urban Gateway and Primary strategic location along the Regional Road R488 the main approach to Carlow town off the M9 motorway. The site is located within the town boundary and within the 60 kmph speed limit at a main roundabout. The subject site is located on a portion of land that was originally part of the overall mixed use development that was planned in 2007 to consist of a large high quality residential estate, a multistorey retirement home. With a medium sized shopping centre, gym and medical centre. The visionary

sustainable mixed use development was delayed due to the recession of 2008-2012. The subject site was not developed into the high density residential model development, and it was sold at auction to recoup the financial losses. Its proper planning and sustainable development potential is critical as part of the overall urban high density residential and commercial, social/ health mixed use development. The site has been vacant for the last 18 years. The informal nature and lack of animal husbandry associated with the ponies in the field is of serious concern to the residents of adjoining Castleoaks estate . There are other high quality developments along the main road with beautiful landscaping. Directly across the main road from the subject site is the 4 Lakes Retailing complex anchored with top brands. The site is zoned 'New Residential' under the joint local area plan.

- Material Contravention of Zoning: The site is zoned 'New Residential' under the joint local area plan. The subject site strategic location in a 'Suburban Area' (as defined by the Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines 2024). The statutory defined density to such sites is 30-80 units per ha. The proposed density of 3.5 units per hectare is grossly inadequate and significantly low the legal density threshold for New Residential \ zoning under the Carlow County Development Plan. The proposed density of 3.5 units per hectare is inconsistent and a material contravention of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and it should be refused on this basis.
- Unsustainable Housing Development: The proposed development of two dwelling houses on prime residential land located at a point of high access to Carlow town on the primary approach and northern gateway of the town, directly adjacent to a large mixed-use commercial development and to a high to medium density development, is a grossly unsustainable use of land, existing services and the town's community investment in the area over many years and decades. It is submitted that the proposed development of two houses on 0.565ha is completely unsustainable and should be refused in principle from land use, strategy forward planning point of view.

- 2No. Vacant Unused- Backland Development areas: The proposed development proposes two separate plots of land, each with a large dwelling facing a setback in a rural style and creating large unused backland behind each dwelling. The applicant needs to clarify the proposed use of providing clear current and future use of the two large plots.
- Setback and pedestrian access: There is a significant distance from the main road to the south along with two distinct pedestrian accesses directly from the main road, which is unacceptable in terms of an urban design layout. The setback is a direct contradiction to urban design principles of creating a strong urban edge at a primary gateway to Carlow town. If the pedestrian accesses were permitted it would serve to isolate the proposed development from the overall residential estate creating isolated enclaves of individual dwellings, contrary to suburban housing design.
- Inconsistent to overall estate character and content : The proposed development of two large dwellings on long linear plots, setback from the main road with vacant unused backland with their own large horseshoe access road providing access to these backlands and bookend on the northern edge of the site by individual large garages, bears no resemblance to the integrated layout and character of the overall estate based on the Essex Design principles of the original housing estate permitted on the site. The proposed design concept of two one-off dwellings are in contradiction to the character of the existing housing estate and do not represent good urban design and should not be supported
- A copy of the original objection to the scheme is appended to the appeal submission

6.2. Applicant Response

There was no response from the applicant to the third-party appeals.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

The planning authority had nothing further to add to the appeal.

7.0 Assessment

7.1 I have considered the appeal file and inspected the site. I intend to assess this appeal under the following headings:

- Relevant Planning Policy
- Compliance with Government \Guidelines
- Compliance with Development
- Design and Layout

7.2 Relevant Planning Policy

7.2.1 The subject site is located in the eastern suburbs of Carlow town, which is governed by the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030 (known as JULAP). Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and JULAP under the Core Strategy designate Carlow as a **Key Town**. It is a function of Key Towns like Carlow and the Carlow-Graiguecullen urban area to ensure a consolidated sustainable spread of growth. According to section 3.2.1 the Core Strategy (Table 2.7) in the **Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028** there is a projected population increase for Carlow Town (including Carlow Environs) by 2028 of 3,107 people. The housing target to accommodate this population growth is identified as 1,330 units, 900 of which are allocated to the former Carlow Town Council area. As the 2024-2030 JULAP period is 2 years beyond the 2022-2028 period of the current Carlow County Development Plan, the overall unit requirement of 2,107 units has been calculated, most of which is to be provided on the New Residential zoned lands. The subject site is zoned 'New Residential'. The quantum of '**New Residential**' zoned land in Carlow Town Environs (in the JULAP) is circa 34 hectares. This 'New Residential' zoned land can deliver an estimated **1,020** units, utilising maximum density of units per hectare in accordance with *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities - January 2024*. The quantum of land zoned 'New Residential', i.e. 34 ha, in the JULAP has been based on applying higher densities per hectare on the subject lands. The JULAP also clearly states, any planning application for residential development on these lands shall have regard to *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH (2024)*. Having examined the planning application, this

issue appears to have been totally disregarded by the applicants and the planning authority.

7.2.2 I refer to the Land Use Zoning Map 2.1 of the Carlow-Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-2030, as stated, the subject site is zoned '**New Residential**'. According to the Zoning Table in Chapter 12 of the JULAP:

Objective: *To provide for new residential development, supporting community facilities and other facilities and services incidental to residential development. This is the primary location for new residential neighbourhoods. Any development shall have a high-quality design and layout with an appropriate mix of housing and associated sustainable transport links including walking, cycling, and public transport to local services and facilities. The density of the development shall be reflective of the location of the lands, with consideration for higher densities where appropriate on more centrally located areas close to employment or services, or in strategic locations along public transport networks. In addition to residential development, consideration will also be given to community facilities, retail services and uses that would support the creation of a sustainable neighbourhood; provided such development or uses are appropriate in scale and do not unduly interfere with the predominant residential land use.*

Any development proposal on New Residential zoned lands must comply with this objective. As this report will demonstrate the proposed development, design and layout does not provide a high quality design, it does not provide an appropriate mix of houses, the density does not reflect the location of the lands, and the fact this is a strategic location on the approach to Carlow town centre from the M9 motorway within a built up suburban footprint.

7.2.3 There are other lands zoned in the JLAP as Existing/ Infill Residential and the Strategic Reserve. However, the pockets of land zoned **New Residential** have been zoned to deliver 1020No. housing units in accordance with *Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities* -

January 2024. In the planning applicant, there was no analysis by the applicant or the planning authority how this requirement is progressing, i.e. the delivery of 1020No. housing units utilising the maximum density, in order to justify such a material departure from stated development plan policy. In my opinion, the proposed density of 3.5 units/ hectares contravenes the objective for the zoning objective **New Residential** as envisaged by the Carlow County Development Plan and JULAP.

7.2.4 The subject site is 0.565 Hectares. It is strategically located alongside a main access route, R448, into Carlow town from the M9. The road infrastructure to serve the site is in place, including footpaths and public lighting. The drainage structure is situ, including a stream that was culvert 150m west of the site. The site is accessed from a roundabout on the Dublin Road with a retail park on the opposite side of the road to the subject site. There is a suburban residential estate immediately north of the site, and a multistorey residential care facility north-west of the site. The Planner's Report on file, summarises the detailed concerns of the third party submissions, in particular the citing of relevant planning policy. The planning authority's assessment would appear to have given no consideration of compliance with the development plan requirements in particular context to the Joint Urban Local Plan, government guidelines for compact growth and sustainable communities and the Revised National Planning Framework published in 2025 which is discussed later in the report. The low density of the proposed development forms the crux of this appeal. In my opinion, the proposed density of 2No. dwellings on the entire site area does not comply with the local development plan policies and objectives, and it should be refused on this basis.

7.3 **Compliance with National Planning Policy and Guidelines**

7.3.1 In essence, the Revised National Planning Framework published in April 2025, introduces the need to plan for a population of between 6.1 to 6.3 million people by 2040, and plan for approximately 50,000 units per annum over that period, to meet additional population and employment growth over and above the original 2018 National Planning Framework projections. This reflects the latest research and

modelling by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which forecasts substantial population growth over the next decade.

7.3.2 The JULAP states in order to ensure continued compliance with the Core Strategy, it will be necessary to monitor the number of permitted and developed units on an annual basis. There was no such analysis provided by the planning authority or the applicant. The Revised NPF 2025, with the subsequent provision of updated planned housing requirements at a local authority level, aims to ensure that housing supply meets both new demand and addresses existing need, creating a sustainable future for housing in Ireland. According to the *Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage*, there is a need to plan for a significant increase in the capacity to deliver housing across the country to meet population projections and associated housing requirements. Having regard to the need to ensure that current local authority development plans can be updated as quickly as possible to reflect the updated housing requirements, it is intended to issue further policy direction to local authorities as quickly as possible following completion of the NPF Revision process, thereby translating updated NPF population and housing figures to the local authority level. In my opinion, it is prudent of the Commission to have regard to the Revised National Planning Framework in considering the current proposal. In addition, I consider significant population growth in Carlow town as displayed in the *2022 Census* is a key factor in the assessment of any housing developments on serviced lands zoned 'New Residential' such as the subject site.

7.3.3 Fundamentally, having regard to the provisions of the "*Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements*" issued by the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) in relation to housing density in Suburban/ Urban Extension areas, in Key Towns (Carlow) as outlined in Table 3.5, the proposed development would result in an inadequate and inappropriate housing density. Essentially, the proposed development of two dwellings on the entire site area, gives rise to an inefficient use of zoned residential land and the public infrastructure supporting it, which is in direct contravention of relevant and current Government policy. The relevant section of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH (2024), states, '*Suburban areas are the low density car orientated residential areas constructed at the edge of the town, while urban*

extension refers to greenfield lands at the edge of the existing built-up footprint area that are zoned for residential or mixed use development. It is a policy and an objective of these Guidelines that residential densities range 30 dph to 50 dph (net) shall apply at suburban and urban extension locations of Key Towns and Large Towns, and that densities of up to 80 dph shall be open for consideration at accessible suburban/ urban locations’. The proposed density of 3.5 units per hectare represents a significant shortfall of the prescribed density on **New Residential** zoned lands. There has been no detailed justification to warrant such a significant and material departure from the requirements of national planning policy. I note the applicant stated the reasoning for only 2 No. dwellings on the entire site evolved from the physical constraints associated with the site being bounded by three roads. This was not clarified any further by the applicant, apart from mentioning separation distances. I do not accept the applicant’s design logic to disregard national and local planning policy and to blatantly depart from the existing residential pattern of the receiving environment.

7.3.4 It is a specific planning policy requirement that in planning the future development of greenfield or edge of city/town locations for housing purposes, planning authorities must secure to promote sustainable patterns of settlement and the policy provisions as outlined in the Revised National Planning Framework, 2040. In conclusion, the proposed development, with a density of 3.5 units/ per hectare within the built-up footprint of Carlow would be contrary to National and Local planning policy objectives and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, which is to ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth, in Line with Objective 7 of the Revised National Planning Framework 2025, “*Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements*” issued by the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) and the local development plans .

7.4 **Design and Layout**

7.4.1 The proposed layout was revised at the request of the planning authority, and the permitted scheme was submitted by further information 27th of March 2025. The 2 No. two storey dwellings face the Dublin Road to the south, however the vehicular access to each dwelling is from the existing cul de sac along the northern site boundary, providing access to Castle Oak residential estate. There is a separate

internal road and a considerable separation distance from the building line of each dwelling to the detached garages on both sites. In my opinion, it is a highly irregular site layout for a suburban site. The neighbourhood character consists of suburban dwellings to the north. There is a retail park on the opposite side of the Dublin Road to the subject site. The proposed development does not maintain or reflect the existing residential form in the area.

7.4.2 I refer to the government publication, *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- Urban Design Manual. 2009*. The proposed density and layout does not reflect the site's edge of a built-up area location, of the character and identity of the neighbourhood character. As stated, the design response is highly irregular for a suburban serviced location, and it does not support efficient and appropriate housing on lands served by an excellent public road network, footpaths, public lighting, social infrastructure and drainage infrastructure. The proposed site boundary treatment consists of extensive walls, mainly 2metres in height, which will create physical and visual barriers from the wider area. The appearance of the proposed dwellings houses and boundary treatment would appear to be more of a compound than a residential development. I consider the overall design of the proposed development, including the front elevations of both dwellings, to be unimaginative, substandard and inappropriate given the pattern of development in the area and road layout.

7.4.3 The "*Urban Design Manual – a Best Practice Guide*" issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009), to accompany the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas includes key criteria such as context, connections, inclusivity, variety and distinctiveness. The proposed layout has not evolved naturally from it's surroundings and bares no relationship to the Castle Oaks estate to the north, or the retail park to the south. Furthermore, the proposed layout fails to create an appropriate urban edge to the public road, because it creates in significant incidental open space and inefficient use of prime serviced suburban land. A much larger integrated scheme was permitted on the subject site in 2004, which involved a large residential scheme and a mixed-use development. This was not completed due to the economic downturn, yet there were a number of extensions of time on the original planning permission as per the Planning History section of this report. As stated, there has been no technical evidence given by the applicant to support such a radical

departure from the planning permission that existed on the subject site for over fifteen years, especially the dramatic decrease in the density proposed on the entire site area and the associated incongruous site layout . The proposed development, would be contrary to the underlying basic principles outlined in the ‘*Urban Design Manual – a Best Practice Guide*’ and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

7.5 Other Matters

Although I am recommending a refusal for serious breach in planning policy matters by the proposed development, I have considered the internal reports, planning report and the decision to grant planning permission with 16No. conditions attached. In the event the Commission is favourably disposed by the proposed development, the subject site is fully serviced and there are no technical issues arising. In addition, development contributions are payable.

8.0 AA Screening

8.1 I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements of S177U the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The subject site is not located within or adjacent to any European Site. The proposed development is located within a residential / retailing area on the eastern outskirts of Carlow town and comprises construction of 2 dwellings and all other ancillary works.

The planning authority carried out a basic Stage 1 screening and determined a An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was not required (Dated 28/11/2024).

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 appreciable effect on a European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- Small scale and domestic nature of the development proposed,
- Location in a serviced urban area, distance from nearest European Sites, and urban nature of intervening habitats and, absence of ecological pathways to any European Site.

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 and 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 Recommendation

9.1 I recommend planning permission be **REFUSED** for the proposed development.

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the zoning objective of the site as New Residential in the Carlow Graiguecullen Joint Urban Local Area Plan 2024-203, the future population and housing targets associated with this zoning as outlined in section 3.2.1 of the Plan, National Policy Objective 7 of the Revised National Planning Framework 2025 to deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth, the neighbourhood character of the area, the proposed density is considered to be insufficient and inappropriate, and contrary to requirements to accommodate maximum densities in line with Ministerial Guidelines, and would constitute underutilisation of this fully serviced residential zoned land, and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. Having regard to the provisions of the “Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities” issued by the Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) in relation to housing density in outer suburban/greenfield sites in Key Towns such as Carlow, it is considered that the proposed development would result in an inadequate housing density that would give rise to an inefficient use of zoned residential land and the public infrastructure supporting it, would contravene Government policy, where it is a specific planning policy requirement that planning authorities must secure sustainable patterns of settlement in order to comply provisions in the National Planning Framework, 2040,

the Objective No. 7 of the Revised National Planning Framework 2025. The proposed development would be contrary the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3. The “Urban Design Manual – a Best Practice Guide” issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009), to accompany the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas includes key criteria such as context, connections, inclusivity, variety and distinctiveness. It is considered that the development as proposed results in a poor design layout that is unimaginative and substandard in its scale and layout, and fails to integrate into the existing neighbourhood character. Furthermore, the proposed layout fails to create an appropriate urban edge to the public road at a prominent location on one of the main entrance roads into Carlow town, resulting in significant private open space and an incoherent residential layout. The proposed development would therefore 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.

Caryn Coogan

20th of January 2026

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference	PI-500073-CW		
Proposed Development Summary	Construct 2 No. two Strey Dwellings		
Development Address	Pollerton Little, Dublin Road, Carlow		
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)	Yes	X	
	No	No further action required	
2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?			
Yes		Class 10(b)(i) 500 residential units.	EIA Mandatory EIAR required
No			Proceed to Q.3
3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?			
		Threshold	Comment (if relevant)
			Conclusion
No		N/A	No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
Yes	X	Class 10(b)(i) 500 residential units 2 no. dwellings proposed.	Proceed to Q.4

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?		
No	X	Preliminary Examination required
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 1 - Form 2
EIA Pre-Screening

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ABP-PL-500073-CW
Proposed Development Summary	2No. two storey dwellings
Development Address	Pollerton Little, Carlow
<p>The Board carried out a preliminary examination [ref. Art. 109(2)(a), Planning and Development regulations 2001, as amended] of at least the nature, size or location of the proposed development, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.</p> <p>This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.</p>	
<p>Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).</p>	<p>The proposed development is for a small residential development within the established residential area of Carlow town. The site is connected to public services and is, what I consider to be inconsistent with the pattern of development in the area.</p>
<p>Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).</p>	<p>Briefly comment on the location of the development, having regard to the criteria listed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No designations apply to the subject site. • The development would be connected to the public wastewater services.

<p>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).</p>	<p>Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development, its location removed from sensitive habitats/features, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on the environment factors listed in Section 171A of the Act.</p>	
Conclusion		
<p>Likelihood of Significant Effects</p>	<p>Conclusion in respect of EIA</p>	<p>Yes or No</p>
<p>There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</p>	<p>EIA is not required.</p>	

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _____