



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-500204-WC

Development	Works to Residential Care Centre.
Location	Skibbereen Residential Care Ltd., Baltimore Road, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Planning Authority	West Cork County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	24640
Applicant(s)	Skibbereen Residential Care Ltd
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission + Conditions
Type of Appeal	Third Party Normal Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	Margaret Leonard and Others
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	22 nd January 2026
Inspector	Carol Smyth

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located within the administrative boundary of Cork County Council and is located in the southwestern area of Skibereen. The site forms part of the Skibereen Residential Care Centre
- 1.2. The Skibereen Residential Care Centre comprises a residential nursing home which accommodates 51 no. residents and 28 no. independent living units. The single storey independent living units are arranged in 4 no. terraces and are located to the east and south of the nursing home. The site which is the subject of this appeal relates to the nursing home, an area of open space to the west of the nursing home and a smaller area of open space to the east of the nursing home.
- 1.3. To the west, the site is bounded by Prencu Manufacturing Ltd. An existing watercourse, the Assolas Stream and a local access road form the boundary to the retirement complex to the rear of the independent living units to the east. The site itself is relatively flat with the ground level rising to the west and southwest. There is vehicular access to the complex via Baltimore Road to the north of the site.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises the following:
 - a) Demolition of the existing retaining wall running along the western boundary of the site and a construction of a new retaining wall in a 2m offset towards that boundary line.
 - b) Internal alterations to southwestern part of the existing building's layout.
 - c) Construction of 3 no. single storey extensions to the existing Residential Care Centre as follows:
 - Extension to the western side of the building 951.3sqm, comprising of 24 no. single bedrooms with en-suite, communal areas, clinical and support accommodation and staff areas.
 - an extension to the northern side of the building, 25.2sqm, comprising of an extended dining room, extended kitchen and additional storage facility.

- an extension to the eastern side of the building 27sqm, comprising a equipment store.
- d) Provision of additional 23 no. parking spaces over 18 no. existing totalling to 41 no. parking spaces.
- e) Provision of 10 no. bicycle stands.
- f) External landscaping works and other associated site works.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

3.2. Cork County Council issued a decision to grant permission on the 21st October 2025 subject to 17 no. conditions.

3.3. Planning Authority Reports

3.3.1. The Planners report recommendation is consistent with the notification decision issued.

3.3.2. Primary Reports

- Area Planner's Report dated 22nd January 2025. Requested further information, in relation to finishes and landscaping design. Other items which formed part of the Further Information request included car parking, rerouting of drainage and sewer layout and foul service connection point.
- Senior Executive Planners Report dated 22nd January 2025. Concurred with the Area Planners report requesting further information.
- Engineering Report dated 3rd December 2024. Notes that an existing wastewater pipe is obstructing the stormwater chamber and requires removal and relaying. Details are also required regarding the new connection route to the public line.
- Engineering Report dated 22nd January 2025. Concerns raised in relation to the proposed provision of car parking. Justification required for reduced provision.
- Environment Report dated 19th December 2024. No objection subject to conditions.

3.3.3. Further Information

- Area Planner's Report dated 14th October 2025. Considered that the further information items were adequately addressed and recommended a grant of permission.
- Senior Executive Planners Report dated 15th October 2025. Concurred with the Area Planners report and recommended that permission be granted.
- Engineering Report dated 2nd September 2025. No objection subject to conditions.

3.4. Prescribed Bodies

- 3.4.1. Uisce Éireann dated 31st December 2024. The submission notes that the applicants applied for a wastewater connection in 2018/2019 at which time they were advised to apply for a trade discharge licence for the premises. Uisce Éireann also advised the applicants of the issues concerning a connection to the sewer at this time. The applicants subsequently connected into the foul sewer and are now seeking permission to extend the business. The submission highlights that there is an existing foul service pipe that traverses Cork County Council storm chamber at invert level and Uisce Eireann have concerns with the existing and current proposals that will need to be addressed by way of further information.
- 3.4.2. Uisce Éireann dated 22nd September 2024. The submission considers that the response to the Further Information request addresses the concerns raised and recommends that a condition be attached in the event of a grant of permission relating to a connection agreement.
- 3.4.3. Inland Fisheries Ireland dated 2nd December 2024. Concerns raised regarding the disposal of effluent to the public sewer requires assurance that there is sufficient capacity in existing network. Requests that they be kept informed when the further information is submitted and when a decision is reached on the application. Condition recommended should permission be granted.

3.5. Third Party Observations

- 3.5.1. In total 2 no. observations were submitted to the Planning Authority in relation to the development. I note that no further observations were submitted to the Planning Authority on foot of revised public notices, following the response to the Further Information request. The issues raised in relation to the planning application also form the grounds of the third party appeal and are addressed below in Sections 6 and 7.

4.0 Planning History

Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 02/5503

Planning Permission granted 50 no. bed care home and 20 no. managed residential units.

Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 04/7224

Planning permission was granted for 8 no. additional managed residential units to be constructed to the east of the main nursing home building on site.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

- 5.1.1. The Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (referred to hereafter as the Development Plan) is the relevant development plan for the area. The subject site is located within the development boundary of Skibbereen on lands which are zoned ZU 18-9: Existing Residential/Mixed Residential & Other Uses under the Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. Residential care and sheltered housing are listed as appropriate uses within the land use zoning objective.
- 5.1.2. Section 18.3 Land Use Zoning Categories of the Development Plan states that the objective for this zoning is to conserve and enhance the quality and character of established residential communities and protect their amenities. Infill developments, extensions, and the refurbishment of existing dwellings will be considered where they are appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the area and do not significantly affect the amenities of surrounding properties. The strengthening of

community facilities and local services will be facilitated subject to the design, scale, and use of the building or development being appropriate for its location.

- 5.1.3. Section 18.3.9 of the Development Plan further states that the scale of new residential and mixed residential developments within the Existing Residential/Mixed Residential and Other Uses should normally respect the pattern and grain of existing urban development in the surrounding area.
- 5.1.4. The Development Plan identifies that a limited area of the overall nursing home and independent living unit complex is located within the vicinity of the watercourse to the east and is situated within Flood Zone A and B. The appeal site has not been identified as being susceptible to flooding.
- 5.1.5. Objective SC 6-9: Cork an Age Friendly County, supports the implementation of the Cork Age Friendly County Programme and the Age Friendly Principles and Guidelines for the Planning Authority 2021 and recognise the demographic challenges that face the county and ensure the provision of suitable facilities and services in the future for all ages and abilities.
- 5.1.6. Objective SC 6-10: Services and Infrastructure for Older Persons Strategy, supports the implementation of the Services and Infrastructure for Older Persons Strategy 2014 as a step towards planning for ageing.
- 5.1.7. Objective SC 6-11: Accommodation for Older Persons, supports the provision of residential care, assisted living, group/community housing and other forms of accommodation for older persons.
- 5.1.8. Objective SC 6-12: Age Friendly Policies, seeks to implement Age Friendly policies in the refurbishment/adaptation of existing housing stock, and to consider the needs of the older generation in terms of design and lifelong living.
- 5.1.9. 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.

5.1.10. Objective BE 15-2 - Protect sites, habitats and species, seeks to protect all-natural heritage sites including Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature reserves, Refuges for Fauna and Ramsar.

5.1.11. Objective BE 15-6: Biodiversity and New Development, seeks to provide the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the development management process.

5.1.12. Objective 15-8: Trees and Woodlands, seeks to protect trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders

5.1.13. 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.

5.1.14. Objective WM 11-12: Surface Water Management

Manage surface water catchments and the use and development of lands adjoining streams, watercourses and rivers in such a way as to minimise damage to property by instances of flooding and with regard to any conservation objectives of European sites within the relevant catchments and floodplains.

5.2. Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines

- 5.2.1. Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (DMURS)
- 5.2.2. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.3.1. The subject site is not located within a designated area. The site is situated proximate to the following natural heritage designations:
 - Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs SAC and pNHA (Site Code 000097) is located approximately 3.1 km to the south of the subject site.
 - Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC (Site Code 000101) is located approximately 7.5 km to the south west of the subject site.
 - Sheeps Head to Toe Head SPA (Site Code 004156) is located approximately 3.8km to the south of the subject site.

5.4. EIA Screening

- 5.4.1. See EIA Pre-Screening Form 1 in Appendix 1. The development is not a class of development requiring mandatory or sub-threshold EIA and therefore there is no EIA Screening requirement.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

This is a third party appeal against the Planning Authority's decision to grant permission. The grounds of appeal have been summarised as follows:

- Objects to the scale, intensity and design of the development which is disproportionate and will have negative impacts on the independent living units surrounding the care home and the quality of life of the residents and will alter the character of the retirement village.

- The conditions attached to the grant of permission do not adequately address the concerns raised by the third party in terms of risks of design, flooding and drainage, car parking, biodiversity or loss of amenity.
- Flooding and Drainage Risk
 - The site has a history of localised flooding.
 - The risk of flooding to vulnerable elderly residents is unacceptable.
 - A raised embankment constructed along the Assolas Stream in 2014 to protect dwellings.
 - Concerns that maintenance responsibilities for SuDs measures are unclear. The conditions attached to the grant of permission do not impose obligations for independent flood risk monitoring.
 - The Planning Authority has not applied a precautionary principle.
- Car Parking and Traffic Concerns
 - Car parking provisions are seriously deficient.
 - There is a deficit of over 40 spaces for the existing and proposed development.
 - The proposal to be contrary to the Development Plan policy in relation to transportation.
 - The justification for reduced parking is not acceptable.
 - Concerns that any overflow car parking from the nursing home will spill into resident's car parking spaces.
 - Increased traffic movements will cause congestion and will pose risks for elderly residents with reduced mobility.
 - A Traffic Impact Assessment or Road safety Audit was not submitted.
 - The development is contrary to Development Plan policy and national road safety policy.
- Residential Amenity and Construction Impacts

- The construction phase will negatively impact upon residents in the Retirement Village for up to two years.
- A construction management plan tailored to elderly residents is required.
- The open space to the east of the retirement village has been viewed by residents as a potential location for a social building. The proposed development serves to threaten this opportunity.
- The Planning Authority did not consider the amenity and social cohesion of the Retirement Village.
- Biodiversity Loss and Impacts
 - The proposed development requires the removal of a significant number of mature trees along the western boundary of the site. Their removal will fundamentally alter the visual and environmental quality of the site.
 - The Planning Authority failed to assess the ecological value of these trees.
 - The Development Plan contains clear objectives to protect existing trees and hedgerows.
 - The decision to grant permission does not include any condition requiring ecological surveys, biodiversity offsets or meaningful replacement planting.
 - The proposed ornamental planting cannot replace the ecological functions of mature trees.
 - The loss of mature trees has direct implications for flood risk.
 - The proposed development will have a psychological impact on elderly residents.
 - The permanent loss of mature trees and green space will reduce quality of life and the sense of enclosure from the new extension will diminish the openness of the site.

6.2. Applicant Response

- The applicant has applied for permission for the development which is fully contained within their ownership boundary.

- The proposal was assessed by the Planning Authority in terms of its impact on adjoining residential development and no concerns were raised by the Planning Authority.
- The applicant has consulted with the residents, and the appellants only represent 5 occupants of the Retirement Village.
- Flooding
 - The Skibereen Flood Relief Scheme has been fully operational and maintained since 2019.
 - The subject site is not situated within the flood zone.
 - The independent living units are located within a flood zone within the catchment of the Assolas Stream which runs along the eastern boundary of the site.
 - In 2014 an earth embankment was installed to mitigate potential flooding of the back garden of the independent living units and there have been no reported flooding instances since these works have been completed.
 - The proposed development incorporates SuDs elements to ensure that the current greenfield runoff rate is not exceeded.
 - There is no increased risk of flooding to properties within the Retirement Village.
 - SuDs measures meet the precautionary principles for development adjacent to flood zones.
 - The western boundary comprises an impermeable concrete wall which contributes to the cumulation of ground water.
 - The proposal to replace the concrete wall with gabions will allow for the ground and storm water to percolate reducing the overloading impact on the culvert.
- Traffic and Car Parking
 - The car parking standards outlined in the Development Plan are maximum standards.

- Current parking demands and trends on site were analysed.
 - Since Covid-19 large gatherings and visitor numbers are restricted due to infection prevention and control measures.
 - The analysis correctly established the bank holiday weekend car parking demand to be the worst-case scenario.
 - The appellants have not provided any evidence to support the concerns regarding traffic safety at the entrance.
 - Traffic safety has been considered, and it is noted that the site entrance is via an existing vehicular entrance.
 - There is a pedestrian footpath into town centre and internal roads are to DMURS standards.
 - The proposed car parking has been designed in clusters allowing car manoeuvres without impacting the ongoing local traffic.
- Construction Impacts
 - The envisages programme of works is 12 months
 - The structure comprises cross laminated timber and prefabricated elements which does not require heavy machinery or deep excavations.
 - There will be a residents liaison officer.
 - A construction management plan will be developed by the engineering consultants and the main contractor in accordance with the planning conditions.
 - Working hours will be restricted adjacent to residential rooms.
 - Residential Amenity
 - The open space referred to in the grounds of appeal is not affected by the development and the appellants are free to pursue development in this area.
 - Amenity features have been incorporated into the proposed development such as an additional secure courtyard and a 'wondering path' adjacent to semi private patios which is open to residents of the retirement Village and the care home alike.

- Biodiversity Loss and Impacts
 - The blue green roof will mitigate against the removal of existing trees/planting and gabion walls provides a biodiversity net gain.
 - The landscape plan identifies 3 no. mature trees to be removed to accommodate the development and recommends 14 no. replacement trees, extensive hedgerow planting and courtyard planting.
 - The over net gain will also contribute to a reduction in rainwater runoff.
 - The development is concentrated on the western side of the site, currently underused. The development will animate the area for the benefit of the whole retirement village.
- Response to Conditions
 - The scale of the building has been broken down into smaller blocks and is at a lower level than the adjacent Independent Living Units ensuring enhanced privacy and dignity.
 - The foul sewer pumping station is a requirement of Uisce Éireann. The foul water pumping station will be constructed in accordance with Uisce Éireann's code of practice and will have 24 hr storage capacity built in.

6.3. **Planning Authority Response**

None on file.

6.4. **Observations**

None on file.

7.0 **Assessment**

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

- Planning History and Principle of Development
- Residential Amenity and Character of the Area
- Biodiversity
- Flooding
- Car Parking and Traffic Safety
- Construction Impacts

7.1. Planning History and Principle of Development

- 7.1.1. This site has an established planning history. The subject site and adjoining land to the immediate south and east relate to the site of an established nursing home and independent living units referred to the grounds of appeal as a retirement village. The overall retirement village was permitted under Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 02/5503 on the 28th May 2003 where permission was granted for a 50 no. bed nursing home and 20 no. independent living units.
- 7.1.2. Subsequently, on the 17th November 2004 permission granted under Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 04/7224 for 8 no. additional independent living units to the east of the nursing home.
- 7.1.3. On the 21st October 2025, following a further information request in relation to design and landscaping, drainage and car parking, permission was granted by Cork County Council to extend the nursing home by an additional 1003.5sqm in the form of 3 no. extensions, which is the subject of this third party appeal. The largest extension is proposed to the western side of the nursing home and has a stated floor area of 951.3sqm providing an additional 24 no. single en-suite rooms with associated communal areas, clinical and support accommodation and staff areas. The two further extensions comprise a 25.2sqm extension to the north (front) of the nursing home to expand the existing dining room and kitchen and provide storage. The extension to the eastern side of the nursing home provides equipment storage and has a stated floor area of 27sqm.
- 7.1.4. As indicated on the drawings submitted to the Planning Authority, the subject site outlined in red on the submitted application drawings comprises an area of 0.75 ha

which includes the nursing home, an area of open space to the west of the nursing home and an area of open space adjoining to independent living units to the east.

- 7.1.5. The subject site is zoned as ZU 18-9: Existing Residential/Mixed Residential & Other Uses under the Development Plan. Residential care and sheltered housing are listed as appropriate uses within the land use zoning objective. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed development accords with the land use zoning objective for the site and is acceptable in principle.

7.2. Residential Amenity and Character of the Area

- 7.2.1. The Third Party contends that in terms of scale, intensity and design, the development is disproportionate and would negatively impact on the surrounding independent living units, diminish resident's quality of life, and change the character of the retirement village. The Appellant further contends that the condition attached in relation to materiality does not address the scale, massing or overlooking impacts of the extensions.
- 7.2.2. In response to the grounds of appeal the Applicant states that the main extension is concentrated on the western side of the site, on an area of open space that is underused and that the development will animate this area for the benefit of the whole retirement village. The response to the grounds of appeal further states that the scale of the western extension has been broken down into smaller blocks and is at a lower level than the adjacent independent living units ensuring privacy.
- 7.2.3. Under Section 18.3 Land Use Zoning Categories of the Development Plan the objective for this land use zoning is to conserve and enhance the quality and character of established residential communities and protect their amenities. I further note that Section 18.3.9 of the Development Plan requires development to respect the pattern and grain of existing urban development in the surrounding area.
- 7.2.4. Having visited the site and having examined the application drawings, I note that the front extension has a floor area of 25.2sqm, matches the eaves height of the main roof structure and projects a stated 1.85 metres from the existing front elevation to align with the front roof projection of the entrance porch. The proposed extension overlooks the vehicular entrance and car park. I consider this element of the development to be minor in nature, and I am satisfied that front extension would not have a negative impact on the character of existing nursing home, the retirement

village and negatively impact on adjacent residential amenity by overlooking, overshadowing or in terms of overbearance.

7.2.5. I further note that the proposed 27sqm single storey equipment store extension to the east of the nursing home, comprises a pitched roof and which is fully contained within an existing walled service yard. In terms of scale, I consider the eastern extension also to be minor in nature. I note that the proposed eastern extension is located approximately 27 metres from the closest independent living unit to the east of the extension. Having regard to the scale and proximity of the extension to the independent living units, I am satisfied that the eastern extension would not have a negative impact on the character of the existing nursing home or the retirement village and would not negatively impact on adjacent residential amenity by overlooking, overshadowing or in terms of overbearance.

7.2.6. The proposed extension to the west of the nursing home has a stated floor area of 951.3sqm and is arranged around an internal courtyard. This structure will be finished in render and has a contemporary asymmetrical shallow pitched roof with a sedum finish. The extension has a maximum height of 4.1 metres relative to the maximum height of the existing nursing home at approximately 5.9 metres. The proposed western extension projects circa 17 metres forward of the front building line and aligns with the rear building line of the nursing home. Given the contemporary design and scale of the western extension I am satisfied that the front projection reads as subservient and does not impact upon the character of the existing building. To the rear the proposed western extension is located approximately 4 metres from the gable elevation and rear garden of the independent living unit to the south. I note that the unit has 2 no. windows in the gable elevation, one which appears to serve a bathroom and the other is a secondary window to an open kitchen living dining area. Given the aspect of the development to the north of the independent living unit, I am satisfied that the proposal will not significantly negatively impact on daylight to any habitable rooms. I further note that there are no windows in the south facing elevation of the western extension. I am therefore satisfied that no overlooking issues will arise. In addition, given the aspect and scale, and separation distance I am satisfied that the extension will not result in any overshadowing or overbearing impacts on the rear private open space of the unit.

- 7.2.7. The western extension is located on open space comprising primarily a grassed area with a small external area / patio area to the west of the lounge/communal sitting room. A concrete path runs along the side of the west elevation along bedroom windows. Having visited the site I note that there is currently there is no access to this area of open space apart from the lounge/communal sitting room. I consider that apart from the patio area, the open space is largely underused and unconnected to the nursing home building.
- 7.2.8. The proposed extension is arranged around an internal landscaped courtyard which is located in close proximity to dayrooms. In addition, the extension provides external semiprivate patio areas accessed from each of the west facing bedroom in the proposed western extension. A landscaped path is proposed in proximity to the proposed semi-private patios which also links to the existing walkway along the perimeter of the building. The submitted documentation indicates that the landscaped walkway will be accessible to all residents of the retirement village. I am therefore satisfied that in terms of location the western extension will improve the residential amenity of the residents of the nursing home and the wider retirement village.
- 7.2.9. The Third Party states that the open space to the east of the nursing home along the front boundary has been viewed by residents as a potential location for a social building and that the proposed extensions serves to threaten this opportunity. Following the Further information request from the Planning Authority the car parking layout was altered, and I note that the open space referred to in the grounds of appeal is not affected by the development. I therefore consider that proposed development would not prejudice any future development proposal in this area.
- 7.2.10. To conclude, the proposed extensions represent an overall increase in floor area of approximately 60% to the nursing home. However, in terms of scale and design I am satisfied that the proposed extensions are subordinate to the nursing home building and will not negatively impact upon the character or scale of the nursing home or the character of the retirement village. I am also satisfied that the extensions would not negatively impact the residential amenity of the surrounding independent living units in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearance. I consider that proposed elements such as the landscape walkway, internal courtyard, and semi-private patio serving each of the west facing bedrooms and improved

facilities including, inter alia, the extended dining area with large areas of glazing overlooking the entrance will improve resident's quality of life. Overall, I consider that the proposed development will not significantly affect the amenities of surrounding properties and is in accordance with the pattern of development in the area and the land use zoning objective for the site as set out in Section 18.3 of the Development Plan.

7.3. Biodiversity

- 7.3.1. The Third Party states that the proposed development requires the removal of a significant number of mature trees along the western boundary of the site and that their removal will alter the visual and environmental quality of the site. The grounds of appeal contend that the Planning Authority failed to assess the ecological value of these trees and that the proposed development will have a psychological impact on elderly residents who chose to live in the retirement village for its quiet landscaped environment. The Appellant considers that the permanent loss of mature trees and green space will reduce quality of life and will diminish the openness of the site. The Appellant further contends that the condition attached in relation to landscaping does not compensate for the loss of mature trees.
- 7.3.2. Objective BE 15-8: Trees and Woodland of the Development Plan seeks to protect trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders while Objective BE 15-6: Biodiversity and New Development of the Development Plan seeks to provide the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the development management process.
- 7.3.3. The submitted landscape plan identifies 3 no. mature trees to be removed to accommodate the western extension. I further note that 14 no. replacement trees, hedgerow planting and courtyard planting are proposed. In addition, I note that the trees which are proposed to be removed are not subject to Tree Preservation Orders. While I consider that the loss of mature trees on the site is regrettable, I acknowledge that there will be a net gain in terms of replacement trees and hedgerow as indicated in the submitted landscape proposal. I consider that the sedum roof and gabion retaining wall will also provide habitats for biodiversity. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal accords with Objective 15-8 Trees and

Woodland and Objective BE15-6 Biodiversity and New Development, of the Development Plan.

7.3.4. I further note the Appellants concerns that the loss of the trees will have implications for flood risk. Having visited the site and having examined the application drawings I note that the trees proposed to be removed are located behind the existing concrete retaining wall also proposed to be removed. I refer the Commission to the Section 7.4 below where I have assessed third party concerns in relation to flooding. The Applicant's response to the grounds of appeal states that the existing retaining wall contributes to the cumulation of ground water and introduces a higher volume of disposal into a culvert that runs along the Baltimore at front of the site and discharges into the Assolas Stream. I am satisfied that the proposal to replace the concrete wall with gabions will allow for the ground and storm water to percolate reducing the overloading impact on the culvert. Therefore, I do not consider that the removal of the tree will increase ground water run-off. I consider that the replacement gabion wall, trees and hedgerow represents over net gain which in my view will contribute to a reduction in rainwater runoff.

7.3.5. On balance, while I consider that the removal of 3 no. mature trees regrettable, I am satisfied that the replacement planting of 14 no. trees and hedgerow and the provision of a sedum roof, will provide a net gain in terms of the overall planting on the site. I further consider that the proposed landscaping plan will provide all residents with a landscaped route through the western portion of the site, and I am satisfied that the proposal will improve the residential amenity and provide an biodiversity gain for the site and is in accordance with Objective 15-8 Trees and Woodland and Objective BE15-6 Biodiversity and New Development of the Development Plan.

7.4. Flooding and Drainage

7.4.1. The Third Party contends that the Assolas Stream, which runs along the eastern boundary of the of the retirement village has a history of localised flooding and that the risk of flooding due to the development on vulnerable elderly residents is unacceptable. The Appellants note that a raised embankment constructed along the Assolas stream in 2014 to protect the independent living units. The Appellant further

contends that the condition attached in relation to foul sewerage does resolve the reliance on a pumping station or maintenance.

- 7.4.2. In response to the grounds of appeal the Applicant notes that the subject site is not situated within the flood zone but recognises that the that the adjacent independent living units are in the flood zone of the Assolas Stream which runs along the rear gardens of the units. The Applicant further outlines that the Skibereen Flood Relief Scheme has been fully operational and maintained since 2019 and that there have been no reported flooding instances since the 2014 earth embankment was installed.
- 7.4.3. As part of the Further Information request the Planning Authority raised concerns in relation to storm water discharge into the Assolas Stream. In response to the further information request the Applicant outlined measures to ensure that the current surface water runoff rate to the Assolas Stream is not exceeded. Sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) measures are proposed which include a blue/green roof design capable of storing and temporarily attenuating stormwater, permeable paving, attenuation tanks and a hydro break. I note that on foot of the further information response, the Planning Authority's Area Engineers raised no concerns regarding the development in relation to drainage subject to conditions.
- 7.4.4. I am satisfied with the combination of SuDs measures proposed and I note that the Planning Authority's Area Engineer raised no concerns in relation to the development subject to standard conditions. I consider that the blue/green roof design is a sustainable environmental approach, which provides an ecological habitat that can store and attenuate stormwater. Furthermore, I note that the proposed permeable paving provides additional rainwater storage at the base of the paving. I note that the documentation submitted outlines that attenuation tanks have been designed to cater for 1:100 year event and that an allowance of 40% has been included for worsening weather which exceeds the 20% required in Section 11.11.26 of the Development Plan. I have no information before me that the proposed development will increase the risk of flooding to the adjacent independent living units to the east and south of the subject site and I am satisfied that the proposed SuDs measures employed will ensure that the existing greenfield runoff rate from the site will not be exceeded.

- 7.4.5. The Appellants contend that Planning Authority has not applied a precautionary principle to flood risk. In relation to the Precautionary Approach, Section 5.26 of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 states that the approach used in assessing flood risk must ensure that a lack of full scientific certainty is not taken as evidence that a flood hazard or risk does not exist. Notwithstanding, Section 11.1.21 Minor Developments of the Development Plan and Section 5.28 of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 states that certain types of development are exempt from the Justification Test. Such development relates to works associated with existing developments, such as extensions, renovations and rebuilding of the existing development, small scale infill and changes of use. I am therefore satisfied that there is no requirement of the justification test for the proposed development.
- 7.4.6. Having regard to the location of the site which is not is a flood zone, the SuDs measured proposed, the Skibereen Flood Relief Scheme and the earth embankment to the rear of the independent living units along the Assolas Stream I am satisfied that the discharge from the development will managed to ensure that runoff to the stream does not exceed existing levels and that there is no increase in the risk of flooding due to the proposed development.
- 7.4.7. The Appellants raise concerns that the flood protection measures proposed as part of the development will require ongoing maintenance and that the obligations in terms of monitoring and maintenance responsibilities are unclear. In response to the grounds of appeal, the Applicant states that the attenuation tanks and hydro break will be installed to manufacturer's instructions and will be inspected and maintained on a regular basis. In this regard Section 5.22 of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 states that conditions relating to maintenance may be included to ensure the regular inspection, maintenance and repair of local or secondary flood defences. Given that the area to the rear of the independent living units is within Flood Zone A as set out in the Development Plan and that surface water from the proposed development is discharging into the Assolas Stream, I consider that should the Commission be mindful to grant permission that a condition in relation to monitoring and maintenance should be attached.
- 7.4.8. In relation to foul drainage and the associated pumping station referred to in the grounds of appeal, I note that Uisce Éireann requested further information in relation

to the foul sewer which was addressed in the Planning Authority's Further Information request. In response to the grounds of appeal, the Applicant states that the pumping station is not necessary to cater for the additional loading from the proposed development, and that it is a requirement of Uisce Éireann to deal with an existing gravity foul sewer outfall pipe. The Applicant further states that the pumping station will have a 24hr storage capacity built in. I note that a condition requiring an Uisce Éireann connection agreement was attached to the Planning Authority's grant of permission. I note that following the response to the further information request Uisce Éireann raised no concerns in relation to the development subject to conditions. I have no information before me that the proposed development will negatively impact on the foul sewer, and I am therefore satisfied that the foul sewer can accommodate the development.

- 7.4.9. To conclude this section, I consider that the SuDs infrastructure incorporated into the design, with an allowance for worsening weather, in combination with a conditioned maintenance and monitoring regime would accord with the provisions of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 and the policies and objectives of the Development Plan and I am satisfied that there is no increase in the risk of flooding due to the proposed development.

7.5. Car Parking and Traffic

- 7.5.1. The grounds of appeal contend that car parking provisions both existing and proposed are deficient. It is further contended that given the location of the site on the periphery of the town with constrained public transport that the proposal is contrary to the Development Plan. The Appellants contend that the justification for reduced parking is not acceptable. The Third Party also raises concerns that any overflow car parking from the nursing home will spill into resident's car parking spaces and that increased traffic movements will cause congestion onto Baltimore Road and will pose risks for elderly residents with reduced mobility. The Appellant considers that the condition attached in relation to construction traffic does address congestion and access for elderly residents.
- 7.5.2. The Planning Authority raised concerns regarding the provision of car parking for the proposed development and required a justification for the proposed quantum of car parking. In response to the grounds of appeal the Applicant states that the car

parking standards outlined in the Development Plan are not minimum standards and that current parking demands and trends on site were analysed in response to the Planning Authority's Further Information request. I note that on foot of the further information response, the Planning Authority's Area Engineers raised no concerns regarding the development in relation to transportation subject to conditions.

- 7.5.3. In this regard I note that the car parking standard set out in the Development Plan are maximum standards. Table 12.6 of the Development Plan sets out a maximum standard of 1 no. space per patient bed, plus 1 space per doctor and 1 space per nursing and ancillary staff. I further note that the Section 12.12.7 of the Development Plan seeks to ensure the adequate and appropriate provision of car parking for new development and seeks to balance car parking provision so that it aligns with and supports compact growth and sustainable transport.
- 7.5.4. In response to the Planning Authority's Further Information request for a justification for the provision of car parking, the Applicant outlined that based on the maximum standards outlined in the Development Plan the development would require 56 no. car parking spaces. The Applicant has detailed that since Covid-19 the management of the nursing home has taken a different approach to large gatherings and numbers are restricted due to infection prevention and control measures. The Applicant further contends that their analysis has established that bank holiday weekend car parking is the worst-case scenario and no worse than Christmas and Easter given the control measures adopted to large gatherings.
- 7.5.5. Having regard to the documentation submitted and having visited the site I note that the existing development provides 18 no. car parking spaces many of which were available on the day of my site visit. The details submitted to the Planning Authority indicates that in a worst-case scenario, a total of 32 car parking spaces are required. The Applicant proposes to provide 38 no. spaces which are fully contained within the red line boundary of the site. It is detailed that the over provision of circa 19% of car parking will allow for the provision of electric car parking spaces.
- 7.5.6. I am satisfied that with the justification put forward by the applicant in relation to the reduced car parking provision and I consider that an appropriate level of car parking has been provided for the development. I am satisfied that car parking from the

nursing home will not impact onto the car parking spaces to the east and south of the site dedicated to the independent living units.

- 7.5.7. In addition, the Appellants have raised concerns regarding traffic safety at the entrance. In this regard I note that there are no alterations proposed to the existing site vehicular entrance from the Baltimore Road. Having visited the site I note that the existing vehicular entrance of is located within the 60kph speed limit. The submitted documentation indicates that the sightlines at the entrance are 150 metres. Table 4.2 of DMURS indicates that sightlines on the road should be 65 metres. I am therefore satisfied that the existing vehicular entrance accords with the DMURS in terms of sightlines. I have no information before me that the proposed development will result in congestion on the Baltimore Road and I am satisfied that the existing vehicular entrance can accommodate traffic movement to and from the development and will not impact on traffic safety.
- 7.5.8. I further note that there is a pedestrian footpath along the Baltimore Road into the town centre which links to a dedicated pedestrian footpath within the development. In addition, I note that the entrance is illuminated with both street lighting and lighting standards within the existing car park. Therefore, I am satisfied that there is no pedestrian conflict at the entrance and I do not consider that the proposed development poses a risk to pedestrian safety.
- 7.5.9. Overall I am satisfied with the justification for reduced car parking levels put forward in the documentation submitted to the Planning Authority in response to the further information request. I consider that the proposed car parking provision is appropriate for the development, and I am satisfied that the existing car parking allocated to the independent living units will not be impacted upon. In addition, I do not consider that the proposed development endanger the public in terms of pedestrian movements, traffic safety or cause congestion on the Baltimore Road.

7.6. **Construction Impacts**

- 7.6.1. The Appellants contend that the construction phase will negatively impact upon residents in the retirement village for up to two years.
- 7.6.2. In response to the grounds of appeal the Applicant states that a programme of works of 12 months is envisaged. The Applicant further outlines that it is proposed to construct the extension with prefabricated elements which does not require heavy

machinery or deep excavations. In addition, the Applicant states that a residents liaison officer will be employed for the duration of the construction project.

- 7.6.3. I note that a condition was attached to the Planning Authority's decision to grant permission requiring the submission of a construction management plan for the written agreement of the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. In response to the grounds of appeal the Applicant states that construction management plan will be developed by the engineering consultants and the main contractor and the working hours will be restricted adjacent to residential rooms.
- 7.6.4. I am consider that the condition in relation to the construction management plan attached Planning Authority's decision to grant permission for the proposed development is reasonable and I am satisfied that the construction of the project will managed in accordance with best practice guidelines and the requirement of the Planning Authority.

8.0 AA Screening

- 8.1.1. The proposed development comprises the extension of an existing nursing home on a 0.75 ha site in an established suburban area. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the planning appeal.
- 8.1.2. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any European Site.

The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- The nature and scale of the proposed development and associated site works.
- The location and distance from the nearest European site and the absence of any meaningful pathways to any European site
- Taking into account the screening determination by the Planning Authority.

I consider that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect individually, or in-combination with other plans and projects, on a European Site and appropriate assessment is therefore not required.

9.0 Water Framework Directive

9.1. 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 water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1. I recommend that planning permission should be granted, subject to conditions.

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

11.1. Having regard to the provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 including the ZU 18-9: Existing Residential/Mixed Residential & Other Uses land use zoning of the site, to the pattern of development in the area, to the development which comprises extensions to an existing nursing home and size of the site, and to the design and layout of the proposed development, it is considered that subject to the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

12.0 Conditions

1	The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the
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	<p>further plans and particulars received by the planning authority on the 20th day of August 2025, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of clarity</p>
2	<p>Details of the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed dwelling shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.</p>
3	<p>Drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of public health.</p>
4	<p>Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall enter into water and/or wastewater connection agreement(s) with Uisce Éireann to provide for a service connection(s) to the public water supply and/or wastewater collection network.</p> <p>All development shall be carried out in compliance with Uisce Éireann's '<i>Standard Details and Codes of Practice</i>'</p> <p>Uisce Éireann does not permit Build Over of its assets. Where the applicant proposes to build over or divert existing water or wastewater services the applicant shall have received written Confirmation of Feasibility of Diversion(s) from Uisce Éireann prior to any works commencing.</p> <p>Reason: To provide adequate water and wastewater facilities.</p>

5	<p>A monitoring and maintenance plan for SuDs infrastructure shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of public health.</p>
6	<p>The internal road network serving the proposed development including turning bays, junctions, parking areas, footpaths, and kerbs shall comply with the detailed construction standards of the planning authority for such works and design standards outlined in Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS).</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of amenity and of traffic and pedestrian safety.</p>
7	<p>Landscaping and Biodiversity planting measures for this site shall be carried out in accordance with landscape drawings no. 25262-2-101 submitted with the planning documentation and as updated by conditions of planning herein. All tree and shrub planting shall be native species only. All landscape/biodiversity planting shall be completed within 18 months of the completion of this development under the supervision of an appropriately qualified and experienced specialist. Any trees/planting that die or are removed within three years of planting shall be replaced in the first planting season thereafter. A compliance report, shall be submitted and agreed with the Planning Authority within a period of two months after the first planting season post completion of construction works.</p> <p>Reason: To protect biodiversity</p>
8	<p>All trees and hedgerows within and on the boundaries of the site, except those specified trees/hedgerows whose removal is authorised by the Planning Authority to facilitate the development, shall be protected during construction and retained thereafter.</p> <p>Reason: To protect biodiversity</p>
9	<p>Site development and building works shall be carried out only between 0800 to 1900 hours Mondays to Fridays inclusive and 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation</p>

	<p>from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.</p> <p>Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity</p>
10	<p>The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise and dust management measures, waste management and recycling of materials, environmental protection measures, welfare facilities, site deliveries, complaints procedure, pest control and traffic management arrangements.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of public safety, environmental protection, and residential amenity.</p>
11	<p>A detailed construction traffic management plan shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. The plan shall include details of arrangements for routes for construction traffic, parking during the construction phase, the location of the compound for storage of plant and machinery and the location for storage of deliveries to the site.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of sustainable transport and safety.</p>
12	<p>Prior to commencement of development, a Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) as set out in the EPA's Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects (2021) shall be prepared and submitted to the planning authority for written agreement. The RWMP shall include specific proposals as to how the RWMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness. All records (including for waste and all resources) pursuant to the agreed RWMP shall be made available for inspection at the site office at all times.</p>

	Reason: In the interest of reducing waste and encouraging recycling.
13	<p>There should be no interference with bridging, draining, culverting of or abstraction from the adjoining stream or any watercourse, their banks or bankside vegetation to facilitate this development without the written agreement of Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of orderly development and to minimise the impact on the fisheries habitat.</p>
14	<p>The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to the An Bord Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.</p> <p>Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.</p>

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.

Carol Smyth

10th March 2026

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference	PL-500204-WC-25		
Proposed Development Summary	Demolition of the existing retaining wall running along the western boundary of the site and a construction of a new retaining wall in a 2m offset towards that boundary line, internal alterations to southwestern part of the existing building's layout. Construction of 3 no. single storey extensions to the existing Residential Care Centre		
Development Address	Skibbereen Residential Care Ltd., Baltimore Road, Skibbereen, Co. Cork		
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	
		No	X
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.....	EIA Mandatory EIAR required
No	X		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)
No	X	N/A	
Yes		Class/Threshold.....	
			Conclusion
			No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
			Proceed to Q.4

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?

No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary Examination required
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING

Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality

An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	PL-500204-WC-25	Townland, address	Skibbereen Residential Care Ltd., Baltimore Road, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Description of project		Demolition of the existing retaining wall running along the western boundary of the site and a construction of a new retaining wall in a 2m offset towards that boundary line, internal alterations to southwestern part of the existing building's layout. Construction of 3 no. single storey extensions to the existing Residential Care Centre	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		Site is located within a suburban area surrounded by residential properties. The ILEN River_040 is located circa 61 metres to the to the east. The Western Celtic Sea (HA18;19;20) Coastal waterbody is located approximately 62 km to the south of the site. The Skibereen-Clonakilty (IE_SW_G_085) groundwater body underlies the site.	
Proposed surface water details		On site attenuation with discharge to culvert which runs along the northern boundary of the site and discharges to the Assolas Stream (ILEN River_040). Discharge rate of stormwater will be controlled with onsite underground attenuation storage and a hydro break to ensure current greenfield run off rate form the site will not be exceeded.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		Uisce Éireann mains water connection. The Uisce Éireann water supply capacity register indicates that there is potential capacity available. Uisce Éireann confirms that a connection can be facilitated.	

Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues		Uisce Éireann mains wastewater connection. The Uisce Éireann Wastewater treatment capacity register indicates that there may be limited capacity available. Uisce Éireann confirms that a connection can be facilitated.				
Others?		No				
Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection						
Identified water body	Distance to (m)	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)
River Waterbody	61 metres	ILEN_040 (IE_SW_20I010350)	Good	Review	Unknown	Surface water run-off
Groundwater Waterbody	Underlying the site	Skibereen- Clonakilty (IE_SW_G_085) Ground Water Body	Good	Not at risk		Drainage to ground
Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.						
CONSTRUCTION PHASE						

No.	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.
1.	Surface	ILEN_040 (IE_SW_2010 10350)	Surface water run off	Water Pollution - Deterioration of surface water quality from pollution of surface water run-off during site preparation and construction	Standard construction practice, and condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan	No	Screened out
2	Discharges to Ground	Skibereen-Clonakilty (IE_SW_G_08 5) Ground Water Body	Drainage to ground	Reduction in groundwater quality from pollution of surface water run-off	Standard construction practice, and condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan	No	Screened out
OPERATIONAL PHASE							

3.	Surface	ILEN_040 (IE_SW_2010 10350)	Surface water run off	Spillages Deterioration of water quality	SuDs features	No	Screened out
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
4.	Decommissioning is not anticipated as this is a permanent residential care development						Screened out