



Inspector's Report

PL-500893-LK-26

Development	Change of use to Limerick Suicide Watch operation and associated site works
Location	Naughton's Place, Henry Street, Limerick City
Planning Authority	Limerick City and County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	25/61213
Applicant	Limerick Suicide Watch
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission
Type of Appeal	Third Party
Appellants	Anne and Michael Leech
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	5 th May 2026
Inspector	Gary Farrelly

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site has a stated area of 0.048 hectares and is located within the city of Limerick at the junction of Henry Street and Naughton's Place. The site comprises of a two-storey flat roofed building on the eastern side of the site with a single storey flat roofed building adjoined to the main building located along the southern boundary. The western part of the site comprises of a yard. The boundaries of the site are defined by a public footpath and roadway to the north (Naughton's Place), Henry Street to the west and the rear property boundaries of the dwellings along Saint Gerard Street to the south. Existing vehicular access to the site is via Naughton's Place. The premises is currently vacant, and its previous commercial uses included a printing shop and a car parts shop.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Permission is sought to change the use of the building to provide a base for Limerick Suicide Watch operations. There will be some minor elevational alterations to the building as well as the provision of car parking and a van/car port. The applicant states that the facility will serve as a secure location for the storage of life-saving equipment, a space for volunteers to coordinate patrols and an operational base to support community suicide prevention activities within the city. The internal layout of the 236sqm building will comprise of an entrance lobby, w.c, counselling room and a gear room on the ground floor and an office, kitchen, gear room and counselling room on the first floor.
- 2.2. The premises will be staffed by trained volunteers with no permanent employees. The primary activity associated with the premises will consist of volunteers collecting equipment at commencement of patrol operations and returning equipment at the conclusion of patrols. Activity within the premises will generally occur between 20:00 and 01:30 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and between 23:00 and 04:30 on Saturdays. There will be occasional daytime access for administration and equipment purposes.

3.0 **Planning Authority Decision**

3.1. **Decision**

The planning authority (PA) decided to grant permission, by Order dated 9th February 2026, subject to 8 no. conditions.

3.2. **Planning Authority Reports**

Planning Reports

The area planner (AP) report on file assessed the proposed development in terms of its principle, the operation, external finishes and signage, access and parking and servicing. The AP sought further information on three items including detailed drawings of the proposed changes to the building, a revised site layout plan showing the omission of a vehicular entrance off Henry Street and the reduction in carparking spaces within the site. After submission of the further information where the applicant requested the PA to reconsider the request to reduce the number of parking spaces, the AP considered the rationale provided by the applicant to be acceptable. The AP recommended a grant of permission which was endorsed by the Senior Executive Planner.

Other Technical Reports (*Appendix 4 of planner's report*)

- Conservation Officer (*report dated 6/1/26*) – This report raised no architectural heritage concerns with the proposed development.
- Fire and Emergency Services (*report dated 19/12/25*) – This report outlined no objection in principle.
- Active Travel (*report dated 22/12/25*) – This section outlined no objection to the proposed development.
- Archaeologist (*report dated 13/1/26*) – This report outlined no objection.
- Roads Department (*report dated 19/1/26*) – This report recommended approval subject to conditions.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

None

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

A single third-party observation was lodged to the PA from Anne and Michael Leech objecting to the proposed development on the grounds of non-compliance with validation criteria, boundary changes and lack of consultation, ownership and consent, hours of operation, parking and traffic safety issues.

4.0 **Relevant Planning History**

None

5.0 **Policy Context**

5.1. **Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028**

Zoning

The subject site is zoned 'City Centre'. The objective of this zoning is to protect, consolidate and facilitate the development of the city centre commercial, retail, educational, leisure, residential, social and community uses and facilities. Community facilities are deemed a generally permitted use under this zoning, subject to compliance with all relevant planning criteria, including applicable policies, objectives, development management standards and Section 28 Guidance.

Architectural Conservation Areas (Volume 3)

The subject site is located within Architectural Conservation Area 1: Newtown Perry.

Objective EH O53 (Architectural Conservation Areas) (Volume 1)

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Protect the character and special interest of an area, which has been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) as set out in Volume 3.
- b) Ensure that all development proposals within an ACA be appropriate to the character of the area having regard to the Character briefs for each area.

Section 10.7 Health and Respite Care

Objective SCS1 O15 (Health Care Facilities)

It is the objective of the Council to:

a) Support and facilitate development and expansion of health service infrastructure by the Health Service Executive, other statutory and voluntary agencies and private healthcare providers in the provision of healthcare facilities at appropriate locations - including the system of hospital care and the provision of community-based primary care facilities, mental health and wellbeing facilities.

Objective SCSi O16 (Emergency Services)

It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the accommodation for emergency services, rescue services and acute care, in locations that facilitate ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

The subject site is not located within any designated natural heritage site. The nearest designated European sites to the proposed development are Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002165) and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site Code 004077), which are both located approximately 350 metres northwest of the site. Additionally, the Inner Shannon Estuary – South Shore proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) is located approximately 630 metres west of the site and the Fergus Estuary and Inner Shannon, North Shore pNHA is located approximately 470 metres north of the site.

6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The proposed development relates to a change of use and is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations). No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination. I refer the Commission to Appendix 1 of this report.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

A third-party appeal was lodged to the Commission on 2nd March 2026 from local residents Michael and Anne Leech. The grounds of appeal are summarised as follows:

- There are concerns regarding the hours of operation of the facility on a residential street, increased number of users of the site and increased vehicular movements including throughout the night. The actual hours of operation are unknown.
- The existing roadway is narrow and the requirement for a new boundary wall at the edge of the footpath together with the location of car parking space number 5 will result in a hazardous situation with limited space for manoeuvring and limited visibility. The extension of the boundary to the alignment of the building would also encroach on the area being used for bin storage. There is no place allocated for off-street storage of bins.
- The area to the west of the vehicular entrance and the area along the southern wall behind the houses on Saint Gerard Street is and was a back entrance to the houses on Saint Gerard Street. This is the location of a manhole which serves these houses and access to this from the public road must be preserved. The area also acts as a fire escape route to Naughtons Place. The sewer system runs under the subject building and there must be access and no incumbrances put in its way. The first-floor fire escape and the relocation of the front door entrance to the southside wall must not impede access to the passageway.
- The number of members associated with Limerick Suicide Operation are in excess of 75 and meetings of this number would be hazardous with vehicular parking in the area not being realistic.
- The existing building has not been maintained and is causing flooding in the backyard of 11 Saint Gerard Street due to blocked gutters, as well as an open waste pipe from a sink/wash basin.
- Concerns are raised regarding the existing passageway in terms of invasive species management, and access such as blocking from parking of vehicles, relocation of the front door entrance, fire escape access.
- The operators are a voluntary organisation and there is no mention of who manages the facility for the purposes of management, control and communications.

- Concerns are raised regarding the width and visibility at both the junctions of Naughtons Place/Henry Street and Little Gerard Street/Saint Gerrard Street. Henry Street and Saint Gerard Street are being changed to a one-way system to facilitate active travel plans.
- The granting of additional traffic into Naughtons Place is not consistent with planning refusal ref. F10/113 / ACP ref. 237950.
- The PA outlined that the footpath is already dished at the entrance which is not correct as the gate is in a different location to the drawings with the yellow box being out of kilter with the drawings.
- There is ambiguity regarding the height of the surrounding wall as it is stated to be 0.75 metre, however, the drawings show a 2-metre high wall.
- A copy of the appellant's submission to the PA is provided as well as a number of photographs showing the views of the surrounding streets.

7.2. Applicant Response

The applicant issued a response to the grounds of appeal on 18th March 2026 which is summarised as follows:

- The premises will operate on a volunteer only basis with no permanent staff employed in the building. The activity associated with the premises will consist of volunteers collecting equipment at the commencement of patrol operations and returning equipment at the conclusion of patrols.
- The premises will therefore function primarily as an equipment storage and coordination point rather than a continuously occupied facility. There will be typically no more than 8 volunteers present on a patrol night.
- Activity will generally occur between 2000 and 0130 hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and 2300 and 0430 hours on Saturdays. Occasional access during normal weekday working hours (Monday – Friday) may occur for organisational purposes including coordination of patrol activities and equipment management.

- The premises has historically accommodated non-residential commercial activity which would have involved greater levels of daytime operational activity than the proposed development. This is a lower intensity use.
- The roads authority of the PA is the statutory body responsible for assessing road safety, access arrangements and traffic generation and has raised no objection to the proposed development. The surrounding road network is part of the south circular road to city centre active travel scheme which will include for infrastructure improvements. This scheme has been subject to detailed traffic assessment and strategic transport planning by the local authority.
- The proposed use will generate limited vehicular activity associated primarily with volunteers collecting and returning equipment. No evidence has been presented demonstrating that the development would generate traffic greater than historic levels associated with the premises or result in a traffic hazard or obstruction within the lane.
- The physical characteristics of the surrounding roads are unrelated to the proposed development. The development does not alter the geometry of the lane or introduce new access points
- Parking is available within the site boundary and therefore does not rely solely on on-street parking. The historical use of the premises would have generated greater parking demand during daytime business hours.
- There are no works proposed to the sewer network or associated infrastructure. Existing manhole arrangements will remain unchanged. Any works would require approval from Uisce Éireann in any case.
- Matters relating to property ownership or legal rights of way are civil matters and not matters to be determined under the Planning and Development Acts, unless a development proposes to obstruct or alter an access route. The proposed development does not alter the existing lane, passageway or access arrangements.
- The proposed development will significantly improve the visual condition and presentation of the site. It involves the reuse of an existing building for a community support facility and the removal of deteriorated structures.

7.3. **Planning Authority Response**

The PA did not issue a response to the grounds of appeal.

8.0 **Assessment**

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

- Principle of the development
- Residential amenity
- Traffic safety

8.2. The Commission should note that whilst the proposed development is located within an architectural conservation area, having regard to the nature and design of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the development would be in accordance with objective EH O53 (Architectural Conservation Areas) of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. I note that the proposed boundary treatments along the north and west boundaries of the site will comprise of a 1.05 metre high railing sitting on top of a 0.75 metre high wall. It is my recommendation that the solid wall part of the treatment is comprised of brick (which is shown on the north boundary but not the western boundary) which I consider would be in accordance with objective EH O53. Overall, I consider the redevelopment of this vacant site would have a positive impact on the visual amenity of the immediate area.

Principle of the development

8.3. The applicant has stated that Limerick Suicide Watch is a voluntary suicide prevention organisation which carries out patrol operations along the River Shannon and bridges within the city. The objective of the patrols is to identify and assist distressed persons. Patrol teams operate several nights per week and may work in cooperation with local emergency services when required. The Commission should note that the purpose of the facility is to provide a base for the storage of safety and rescue equipment as well as a location for the coordination of patrol teams operating in the facility. Volunteers

will collect equipment at the commencement of patrol activity and return equipment at conclusion of patrols.

- 8.4. I note that the subject site is located on lands zoned 'City Centre' within the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. The objective of this zoning includes the facilitating of community uses and facilities. Accordingly, I consider that the proposed development would comply with the zoning objective of the site.
- 8.5. Moreover, the Commission should note that objective SCS1 O16 (Emergency Services) of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 seeks to facilitate the accommodation for emergency and rescue services, in locations that facilitate ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network. I note that the subject site is located off Henry Street and within 500 metres of the River Shannon as well as approximately 650 metres from Shannon Bridge. Therefore, I consider the proposed siting of the facility in this location would be in accordance with objective SCS1 O16 of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.

Residential amenity

- 8.6. I acknowledge the appellants' concerns of the nature of the facility accommodating activity during night-time hours. The Commission should note that the applicant clarified in its appeal response that the hours of operation of the facility would be between the hours of 8pm and 1.30am on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and between 11pm and 4.30am on Saturdays. It also clarified that there would be no more than 8 volunteers on patrol each night and there would be no permanent staff employed in the building.
- 8.7. Having regard to the established commercial nature of the site which previously accommodated printing and car parts shops, together with the primary purpose of the facility as a storage space for equipment and associated collections and drop offs for patrols, I have no significant concerns with the impact of the proposed development in terms of residential amenity. However, if the Commission is minded to grant permission I recommend that a noise limit condition is attached in the interest of protecting the amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

Traffic Safety

- 8.8. I note the appellants' concerns in relation to traffic safety including in terms of the level of car parking provision, visibility from the access onto Naughton's Place and the width of the roadway serving the site.
- 8.9. Firstly, with regards to car parking, I note that a total of 5 no. spaces, 1 no. accessible space as well as a van/car port with an EV charger are proposed to be provided within the site. The Commission should note that the PA requested the applicant to reduce the level of onsite car parking at further information stage, however, the applicant requested the PA to reconsider such a requirement due to the nature of the operation. I note that the PA did reconsider the issue and accepted the level of parking provision primarily due to the hours of operation being during evening and night time hours where there would be limited public transport options available for staff.
- 8.10. I have reviewed Table DM9(a) of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 which sets out the maximum car parking standards for uses within the city. I note that the subject use is not specifically set out with the community facilities section of Table DM9(a), however, it is stipulated that community centres would be addressed on a case by case basis. Therefore, having regard to the applicant's justification for the level of car parking and to the PA's assessment and conclusion on same, I am satisfied with the level of car parking provision within the site.
- 8.11. Secondly, with regards to the issue of visibility at the proposed access to the site, whilst the submitted plans did not illustrate achievable sightlines from the entrance, I note that the site already benefits from a vehicular entrance off Naughton's Place, supported by a dropped kerb and yellow hatched box on the roadway. Whilst I note that it is proposed to relocate the vehicular entrance modestly to the west closer to the junction with Henry Street, I note that the Roads Department of the PA outlined no objection to the proposals. However, I note its concerns regarding the location of car parking space no. 5 in terms of potentially compromising visibility and am satisfied that such concerns can be adequately addressed by condition.
- 8.12. Thirdly, with regards to the width of Naughton's Place, the Commission should note that this road is an established roadway that already accommodates vehicular traffic movements. I note that there are no works proposed to the width of the existing roadway or footpath. Therefore, having regard to this and to the nature of the operation

with traffic movements outside of peak travel times I have no significant concerns with same.

Other Issues

Access rights

- 8.13. I note that the appellants' have raised concerns on the loss of access to a passageway on the southern boundary of the site. Concerns relate to existing manhole access arrangements, the location of the fire escape, the door on the south elevation of the building and to the parking of vehicles impeding the access. The Commission should note that the fire escape is an existing feature of the building and this is proposed to be removed as illustrated on the submitted drawings. The door on the southern elevation will serve a car/van port which is located in an area that already comprises of a single storey structure which is to be replaced. I also note no works are proposed to the sewer infrastructure. Notwithstanding this, in terms of the legal interest, I am satisfied that the applicant has provided sufficient evidence of their legal intent to make an application. Any further legal dispute is considered a civil matter and is outside the scope of the planning appeal. In any case, this is a matter to be resolved between the parties, having regard to the provisions of s.34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Drainage

- 8.14. The appellants' have also raised concerns with the current condition of the site resulting in flooding of adjoining properties due to blocked gutters and broken pipes. I consider that the redevelopment of this vacant site would result in a positive outcome on this issue. Moreover, if the Commission is minded to grant permission, I recommend a condition is attached that ensures that all surface water is managed within the subject site and does not enter adjoining properties.

Bin Storage

- 8.15. I acknowledge the appellants' comments regarding bin storage, however, I am satisfied there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate same.

9.0 **Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening**

9.1. I have considered the project in light of the requirements of Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The closest European sites, part of the Natura 2000 Network, is the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code 002165) and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (Site Code 004077), which are both located approximately 350 metres northwest of the site. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- To the scale and nature of the change of use proposed development.
- To the location of the proposed development within a built-up urban area and to the built-up nature of the surrounding area.
- To the distance from the nearest European sites regarding any other potential ecological pathways and intervening lands.
- Taking into account the screening determination by the PA.

9.2. I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Likely significant effects are excluded and therefore Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, is not required.

10.0 **Water Framework Directive (WFD)**

10.1. An assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken with regard to the objectives set out in Article 4 of the European Union Water Framework Directive. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, it is concluded that the proposal will not result in any risk of deterioration in the status of any water body, including surface waters (rivers and lakes), groundwater, transitional waters or coastal waters. This applies to both qualitative and quantitative status, and in respect of temporary and permanent effects.

10.2. In addition, the proposed development will not adversely affect the achievement of established environmental objectives, including the protection, maintenance and improvement of water body status, as required under the Directive. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with the requirements of Article 4.

11.0 Recommendation

It is my recommendation to the Commission that permission is **Granted**, subject to conditions, for the reasons and considerations set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the purpose and nature of the proposed operation, to the 'City Centre' zoning objective pertaining to the site where community facilities are considered generally permitted as per the land use zoning matrix of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, to the proximity of the proposed development to the road network of the city centre and to the design and layout of the proposed development, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed change of use to a Limerick Suicide Watch operation would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience and would not seriously injure the amenities of the area or property in the vicinity. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed change of use would be in accordance with Objective SCS1 O16 (Emergency Services) of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 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 further plans and particulars received by the planning authority on the 28th day of January 2026, 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.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. During the operational phase of the proposed development the noise level shall not exceed the following:

- (a) 55 dB(A) rated sound level between the hours of 0700 to 2300, and

- (b) 45 dB(A) 15min and 60 dB LAfmax, 15 minutes at all other times, (corrected for a tonal or impulsive component) as measured at any point along the boundary of the site.

Procedures for the purpose of determining compliance with this limit shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Reason: To protect the amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

3. The internal layout of the car parking area shall comply with the detailed construction standards of the planning authority and shall not impede visibility for vehicles entering and exiting the site.

Reason: In the interest of traffic and pedestrian safety.

4. No advertisement or advertisement structure, the exhibition or erection of which would otherwise constitute exempted development under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), shall be displayed or erected on the building exterior/within the curtilage of the site without a prior grant of planning permission.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

5. Site development and building works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 and 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 and 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times shall only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written agreement has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

6. Drainage arrangements shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. All surface water generated within the site boundaries shall be collected and disposed of within the curtilage of the site. No surface water from roofs, paved areas or otherwise shall discharge onto the public road or to adjoining properties.

Reason: In the interest of public health and surface water management.

7. The boundary treatment of the site shall be in accordance with the details lodged with the application. The wall component of the boundary treatment shall comprise of solid brick only. Details of the boundary treatment, railings and brick colour shall be submitted to and agreed with the planning authority prior to commencement of the development.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to ensure an appropriate high standard of development within the architectural conservation area.

Declaration

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 me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Gary Farrelly

Planning Inspector

19th May 2026

Appendix 1: EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL500893-LK-26
Proposed Development Summary	Change of use to Limerick Suicide Watch operation and associated site works
Development Address	Naughton's Place, Henry Street, Limerick City
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required.
<p><i>(For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources) 	
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	

Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. **EIA is Mandatory.**

Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. **Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)**

Inspector: _____

Date: 19th May 2026