



Inspector's Report

PL-500951-DL-26

Development	Construction of a dry agricultural shed with connection to all existing services
Location	Laraghrril, Culdaff, Lifford Po, Co. Donegal
Planning Authority	Donegal County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2562315
Applicant(s)	Geard Carey
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party Normal Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	Geard Carey
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	27 th April 2026
Inspector	Stephanie Farrington

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site, which has a stated area of 0.14ha, is located in the townland of Laraghirril, Culdaff, Co. Donegal. The site is currently in agricultural use. Site boundaries include post and rail fencing and mature hedgerow. Access to the site is provided via a rural laneway off the L1291-1. This access road services the appeal site, adjoining farmyard buildings to the south east and existing agricultural shed to the southwest.
- 1.2. The existing character of development within the vicinity of the site is rural in nature with agricultural uses and one-off rural houses. The site is adjoined by an existing dwelling and associated farm buildings to the southeast.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises of construction of a dry agricultural shed with connection to all existing services. The proposed shed has a gross floor area of 180.42 sq.m. and a ridge height of 7m.
- 2.2. Access to the site is proposed via the rural laneway off the L1291-1.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Donegal County Council refused permission for the development in accordance with the following reasons and considerations:

1. The subject site is located in the rural townland of Laraghirril categorised as an area of Moderate Scenic Amenity, (Policy L-P-2 states, 'to protect areas identified as 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity', County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan').

Having regard to (i) the proposed location of the development, outside of and removed from any existing farmyard complex within the control of the applicant, (ii) the mass and scale of the structure proposed relative to existing vernacular structures south-east of the site, and minimal alterations in terms of location and siting relative to the previous refusal permission, planning ref: 25/61235 refers and (iii) restricted site boundaries which prevent for consideration of relocating to a more appropriate setting, it is considered that the proposed development would result in a haphazard form of development which would lead to unnecessary scarring and would detract from the quality of this landscape. To permit development as proposed would materially contravene the aforementioned policy and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The siting, reorientation and design of the proposed development, within 75m of an occupied vernacular farmhouse and associated stone outbuildings form a collection of vernacular structures that contribute positively to the architectural heritage and character of the rural landscape. The siting of the proposed agricultural shed in close proximity to the vernacular farm holding would materially contravene the objectives and policies of Chapter 11 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030, specifically Objective AH-O-1, and Policy AH-P-9, which seek to protect, conserve and preserve vernacular structures, historic building stock and enhance the established character, forms, material features, and settings of vernacular buildings and historic building stock that are considered to be intrinsic elements of the character of a place.

The proposed development would erode local character and the historic landscape and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

Planner's Report (09/02/2026)

The Planner's Report recommends that permission is refused for the development in accordance with the reasons and considerations set out within the planning authority's decision. The following provides a summary of the key points raised:

- Principle of Development: The planner's report refers to the planning history of the site wherein permission was refused for a similar proposal under PA Ref: 2561238 on grounds of being contrary to Development Plan provisions including L-P-2 in terms of setting, Objective AH-O-1 and Policy AH-P-9 in terms of impact on vernacular buildings and failure to demonstrate sufficient legal interest. The report outlines that the current proposal is for an agricultural shed on lands which are not identifiable as a working farm, and overall landholding has once again not been indicated on submitted plans/maps, as such the need of same is once again questionable. The principle of the proposal has therefore not been established.
- Siting and Design: The report outlines that the amendments to the layout and orientation from the previously proposed under PA Ref: 25/61238 are minimal and fail to address the previous reasons for refusal.
- Residential Amenity: The report outlines that considering the physical separation distances between the subject site and the neighbouring dwellings no issues arise in relation to loss of privacy, overlooking or residential amenity.
- Vehicular Access: The planner's report cross refers to the report from the Roads Department which raises no objection to the proposed access arrangements via the existing laneway.
- Public Health: Existing water supply on site. Surface water is to be collected in gullies and discharged to an open drain. Applicant would be obliged to comply with EC best practice in the instance of a grant of permission.
- Heritage: The proposed agricultural dry shed is located approx. 75m (previously 70m) from a vernacular small farm holding consisting of a single storey cottage and several stone outbuildings centred around a yard. These modest structures are of vernacular design, displaying features typical of Donegal's traditional rural buildings, and make a positive contribution to the historic character and visual coherence of this rural landscape. Although not

Protected Structures, these buildings are acknowledged to be of heritage value under Policy AH-P-9 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030. The report outlines that the siting and design of the proposed shed will have a detrimental visual impact on the adjoining vernacular farm complex.

- Appropriate Assessment: The planner’s report refers to the nearest Natura 2000 site North Inishowen Coast SAC (002012), 2.8km away. Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposed development, alongside the physical distances from the nearest Natura 2000 site (2.8km), and no known direct hydrological links, it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have any significant effect, individually or in combination with any other plan or project, and it considered that Screening for Appropriate Assessment is not required in this instance.
- Environmental Impact Assessment: The report outlines that having regard to the limited scale of the proposed development and location of the site, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Roads and Transportation Planning Report (12/01/26): - No objection subject to conditions.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Loughs Agency (02/02/26): No objection subject to conditions. The cited conditions include adherence with EPA and good agricultural practice for protection of waters is undertaken.

3.4. Third Party Observations

1 no. submission was made in respect of the proposed development from the owner of the existing dwelling to the southeast. The key issues raised are summarised as follows:

- There is little difference between the proposed development and the development previously refused on site under PA Ref: 2561238. The reasons for refusal are still applicable.
- Proposed development is contrary to Policy L-P-2 and Objective AH -O-1 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2023 (CDDP).
- The submission refers to the history of the farmhouse. The submission outlines that the structure was built in the 1800's and outlines that the farmhouse was originally one of five such farmhouses, all set back from the public road, each with its own adjoining strip of farmland. These were the residences of tenant farmers until eventually bought out from the local landlord. The farmhouse and stone outbuildings is one of only two properties of the original five, which remain in a habitable state. The submission refers to plans for further restoration work at the property.
- The submission outlines that the development would detract from the setting of the house. It is stated that the proposed planting would not address the scale and size of the proposed structure.
- The development is deemed to be contrary to Objective TOU-O-1 of the CDDP which seeks to *“facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal’s tourism product as a key economic driver of, and social catalyst for the County, whilst protecting and enhancing the County’s landscape, natural heritage, built heritage and communities from inappropriate development that would detract from the tourism product”*.
- The observation outlines that the siting of the development in very close proximity to the private access lane, farmhouse and farm buildings negatively impacts the entrance and character of the vernacular built heritage grouping and access. The scale, height and bulk of the proposal is deemed to be out of scale with the modest domestic scale of vernacular farm buildings on the observer’s property. The development is not a high-quality design.
- Site notice no. 2 was not in place at the time of writing the submission. Site notice no.1 was not erected on the date as set out within the application.
- Inadequate vision lines.

- Surface water from the shed to watercourse could result in pollutants and toxins entering ground waters and nearby streams and watercourses.
- Removal of hedging and boundaries will negatively impact on the character and setting of the existing vernacular buildings.

4.0 Planning History

4.1. PA Ref: 2561238: Donegal County Council refused permission in September 2025 for construction of a dry agricultural shed with connection to all existing services. The reasons for refusal are summarised as follows:

1. The development, by reason of its location outside of and removed from any farmyard complex within the control of the applicant and the mass and scale of the structure relative to existing structures to the southeast would result in haphazard development and would detract from the quality of the landscape. The development would materially contravene Policy L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan which seeks to protect areas of High Scenic Amenity and Moderate.
2. The siting and design of the development, within 70m of an unoccupied vernacular farmhouse and associated stone outbuildings would materially contravene Objective AH-O-1 and Policy AH-P-9 of the County Donegal Development Plan. The proposed development would erode local character and historic landscape and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
3. The Planning Authority is not satisfied on the basis of the information submitted that the applicant has demonstrated sufficient legal interest in the subject site. Accordingly, to permit the proposed development would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030

Chapter 6: Housing

- 5.1.1. The subject site is located within a rural area outside of any settlement boundary identified within the Development Plan. The site is located in an area designated as ‘Structurally Weak Rural Area’ as identified within Map 6.3.1 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 Rural Area Types.
- 5.1.2. Section 6.3.4 of the Plan outlines that all new development within the County, including rural housing developments, must have regard to the specific landscape classification, in terms of integration and assimilation of development into the receiving landscape. In this context, the policies of this Plan seek to ensure that residential development in rural areas is provided at appropriate locations and in a manner that will sustain rural communities without having a negative impact upon key economic, environmental, natural and cultural heritage assets of rural areas.
- 5.1.3. The following policies are of relevance:
- Policy RH-P-3 seeks: *To consider proposals for new one-off housing within ‘Structurally Weak Rural Areas’ from any prospective applicants for a dwelling house, subject to siting and design considerations and compliance with all other relevant policies of this Plan including Policy RH-P-9. New holiday homes will not be permitted in these areas.*
 - Policy RH-P-9: outlines that proposals for individual dwellings (including refurbishment, replacement and/or extension projects) shall be sited and designed in a manner that is sensitive to the integrity and character of rural areas as identified in Map 11.1: ‘Scenic Amenity’ of this Plan, and that enables the development to be assimilated into the receiving landscape. Proposals shall be subject to the application of best practice in relation to the siting, location and design of rural housing as set out in Donegal County Council’s ‘Rural Housing Location, Siting and Design Guide’.

The policy also sets out detailed considerations which the Council will be guided by in assessing applications for individual dwellings including iii A proposed dwelling shall not result in a development which by its positioning, siting or location would be detrimental to the amenity of the area or of other rural dwellers or would constitute haphazard development; and iv.A proposed

dwelling will be unacceptable where it is prominent in the landscape. Other criteria listed under Policy RH-P-9 include impact on Natura 2000 sites, site/access egress and safe and efficient disposal of surface waters.

Chapter 7: Economic Development

5.1.4. Chapter 7 of the Development Plan recognises the contribution and potential of traditional sectors such as agriculture and fishing, emerging sectors such as the blue economy and growing business capabilities within key clusters such as Fin Tech, InsurTech, Reg Tech, Med Tech and advanced manufacturing with a clear policy base to support their sustainable expansion in Donegal.

5.1.5. The following policies and objectives of the Plan are of relevance:

- Objective ED-O-3: To support appropriately scaled and located rural economic development projects where they are functionally related to the countryside.
- Objective ED-O-13: To support and facilitate, where appropriate, the further growth and development of the County's economic base through the key sectors identified in this plan. Proposals outside of these sectors shall be open for consideration and assessed against all policies and objectives of this plan, as well as national, regional plans, policies and guidelines.
- Policy ED-P-9: It is a policy of the Council that any proposal for economic development use, in addition to other policy provisions of this Plan, will be required to meet all the following criteria;
 - a. It is compatible with surrounding land uses existing or approved;
 - b. It would not be detrimental to the character of any area designated as being of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA);
 - c. It does not harm the amenities of nearby residents;
 - d. There is existing or programmed capacity in the water infrastructure (supply and/or effluent disposal) or suitable developer-led improvements can be identified and delivered;
 - e. The existing road network can safely handle any extra vehicular traffic generated by the proposed development or suitable developer-led improvements are identified and delivered to overcome any road problems;

- f. Adequate access arrangements, parking, maneuvering and servicing areas are provided in line with the development and technical standards set out in this plan or as otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority;
- g. It does not create a noise nuisance;
- h. It is capable of dealing satisfactorily with any emission(s);
- i. It does not adversely affect important features of the built heritage or natural heritage including natura 2000 sites;
- j. It is not located in an area at flood risk and/or will not cause or exacerbate flooding;
- k. The site layout, building design, associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements are of high quality and assist the promotion of sustainability and biodiversity;
- l. Appropriate boundary treatment and means of enclosure are provided and any areas of outside storage proposed are adequately screened from public view;
- m. In the case of proposals in the countryside, there are satisfactory measures to assist integration into the landscape;
- n. It does not compromise water quality nor conflict with the programme of measures contained within the current northwestern river basin management plan.

Chapter 8: Tourism

- TOU-O-1 To facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal's tourism product as a key economic driver of, and social catalyst for the County, whilst protecting and enhancing the County's landscape, natural heritage, built heritage, and communities from inappropriate development that would detract from the tourism product.

Chapter 11: Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage

- 5.1.6. Chapter 11 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030 outlines the local authority's commitment to protecting built heritage, including unprotected vernacular structures.

- 5.1.7. Section 11.2 of the Plan relates to Landscape. The Plan identifies three separate Landscape Classifications for the county, these are illustrated on Map 11.1 and as follows: Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA), Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA), Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA). The subject site also falls within an area of 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' as identified in Map 11.1 Scenic Amenity of the Development Plan.
- 5.1.8. The Development Plan sets out the following descriptions for such areas: Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA): *These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.*
- 5.1.9. The following provisions of the plan are of relevance:
- Objective L-O-1 To protect, manage and conserve the character, quality and value of the Donegal landscape.
 - Policy L-P-2 of the Plan seeks: *'to protect areas identified as 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity'. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan'.*
- 5.1.10. The County Development Plan outlines that *"There is a need to protect and conserve the character and quality of the identified stretches of scenic routes that have special views and prospects that are identified on Map 11.1"*. No scenic routes are designated within the vicinity of the appeal site.
- 5.1.11. Section 11.3 of the Plan relates to Built and Architectural Conservation. Section 11.3.5 of the Plan relates to Vernacular Architecture and Historic Traditional Building Stock. This outlines that vernacular structures and their associated features reflect the unique local history and character of a place, reflecting local traditions, available materials and craftsmanship.
- 5.1.12. The following policies and objectives are of relevance:

- Objective AH-O-1: Conserve, manage, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Donegal namely Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, NIAH structures, designed landscapes and historic gardens, vernacular, historic building stock industrial and maritime built heritage, character and setting of such structures.
- Objective AH-O-2: Promote the sustainable and sensitive re-use of the existing built heritage as a positive response to climate change and promote the circular economy and climate mitigation and adaptation through proper maintenance, repair and appropriate retro fitting, adaptative re-use and regeneration employing best conservation practice. This objective will be pursued on a collaborative and integrated basis in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and through all available funding mechanisms.
- Policy **AH-P-9**: Seek to protect, conserve and preserve vernacular structures, historic building stock and enhance the established character, forms, material features, and settings of vernacular buildings and historic building stock that are considered to be intrinsic elements of the character of a place, save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including, but not restricted to, the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, the Bridgend to County border project scheme, the Bunrana Inner Relief Road and Greenways., including:
 - a. Vernacular and traditional style farmhouse buildings including Clachans and local authority labourer's cottages.
 - b. Vernacular buildings, groupings of buildings on Donegal's Islands.
 - c. Historic thatch structures as a key component of the built heritage of the county.
 - d. Historic Building Stock such as traditionally stone built buildings.

This policy will be implemented by the Council in so far as same can be practicably and reasonably achieved within the context of said projects.

Chapter 16 – Technical Standards

5.1.13. Policy TS-P-1, 'To require compliance with the following technical standards, where applicable, in addition to all other relevant policy provisions of this Plan and relevant Governmental guidance and standards.'

Rural Housing- Location, Siting and Design Guide – County Donegal Development Plan

5.1.14. This Design Guide derives from the County Donegal Development Plan Core Document, Policy RH-P-9 Part 1 where it states: 'Proposals for individual dwellings shall be subject to the application of Best Practice in relation to the siting, location and design of rural housing as set Donegal County Council's 'Rural Housing Design Guidelines'.

5.1.15. The Design Guide relates to rural houses in the rural area but also includes reference to associated rural buildings.

5.1.16. Key principles set out within the design guide include:

- New buildings should harmonise with rather than dominate the visual character of an area.
- The scale and form of a new building will be considered in relation to the surface character of the location; terrain, vegetation cover, topography etc., as well as the size and specifics of the site and its surroundings to determine how easily a new building is likely to integrate within its setting.
- New buildings in the countryside should respect the rural context, and contemporary design solutions should demonstrate an informed use of traditional reference.

5.1.17. Section 4.5 sets out details in relation to Material/ Specifications and recommends the use of a restrained palette of material reinforcing the simplicity of elevation.

5.2. Water Framework Directive

5.2.1. The European Union Water Framework Directive aims to improve water quality and applies to all water bodies. The Directive runs in six-year cycles and is currently in its third cycle 2022 to 2027. Member States are required to achieve 'good' status in all waters and must ensure that status does not deteriorate. The Directive has been given effect by the Surface Water and Groundwater Regulations.

5.3. **S.I. No. 588/2025 - European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2025**

The European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 588/2025) set out Ireland's legal framework for preventing water pollution from agricultural sources, implementing the Nitrates Action Programme under the EU Nitrates Directive.

5.4. **Natural Heritage Designations**

The site is not located in or adjacent to a European site. The nearest designated sites to the appeal site include the North Inishowen Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Proposed Natural Heritage Area (p NHA) (Site Code 002012) c. 1.9km north of the site, 2.8km to the east.

6.0 **EIA Screening**

6.1. The proposed development 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. Refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 of report.

7.0 **The Appeal**

7.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

7.1.1. A first party appeal was submitted in respect of Donegal County Council's notification of decision to refuse permission for the development. The following provides a summary of the grounds of appeal:

Reason for Refusal no. 1

- The proposed site is located within a sheltered location that is sensitive to the character of this area. The proposed development incorporates existing mature landscaping and includes proposals to plant semi mature trees around the site to help incorporate into the landscape.

- The appeal outlines that the colour and size of the shed reflect those existing within the area including the existing shed within the immediate vicinity of the site. The appeal outlines that the shed is sited within the vicinity of the access from the lane to avoid haphazard development within the middle of the site.
- The appeal outlines that the siting of the shed in the middle of the field (10m from the road and 100m from adjoining dwellings) would fall under exemptions within the Planning and Development Regulations. The appeal outlines that the mature landscape backdrop is more in keeping with the surrounding landscape.

Reason for Refusal No. 2

- The appeal outlines that the proposed agricultural shed is small in size and located within a rural area. Figure 1 of the appeal includes an extract from Land Direct which illustrates the landholding within the vicinity of the appeal site within the ownership of the applicant.
- The appeal outlines that the planning authority's decision has resulted in a situation where the applicant has to drive 5 miles to his farmyard with tractor and trailer every time he wants to get fertiliser, posts, wiring, maintenance, equipment, machinery to the site. During harvest time he would have to transport bales of hay, straw or crop back to his farmyard. The appeal refers to road safety and emissions associated with same.
- The appeal outlines that the proposed shed is located over 70m from the farmhouse and farm buildings to the southeast and has a buffer zone comprising of mature trees. The applicant accepts that these buildings are intrinsic elements of character to the rural area but also outlines that agricultural sheds are characteristic of the area and assist farmers in maintaining their land.

Conclusion

- The appeal refers to an existing agricultural shed within the vicinity of the site (as illustrated in Figure 5) which has not had an adverse impact on vernacular farmhouse.

- The appeal outlines that the submission on the application is from a person who doesn't live in the area and is preventing a farmer from building a small agricultural shed to facilitate farming activities.
- The Commission is requested to overturn the decision of Donegal County Council and grant permission for the development.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

7.2.1. Donegal County Council provided a response to the grounds of appeal. The following provides a summary of the key points raised.

- The appeal response outlines that the matters raised within the appeal were addressed within the planner's report dated the 9th of March 2026.
- It is the view of the Planning Authority that the application fails to meaningfully address the previous reasons for refusal (PA REF: 25/61238) and despite the applicant's overall landholding the restricted red line boundary did not allow for the Planning Authority to seek further amendments/repositioning of the proposed structure in order to address previous concerns.
- The Planning Authority considers that the reasons for refusal set out within the decision should be upheld.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. This is a first-party appeal in respect of Donegal County Council's notification of decision to refuse permission for construction of a dry agricultural shed at Laraghirril, Culdaff, Lifford PO, Co. Donegal. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, and inspected the site, and having regard to relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the main issues in this appeal are those raised within Donegal County Council's reasons for refusal as follows:

- Reason for Refusal no. 1 – Principle of Development and Impact on Visual Amenity
- Reason for Refusal no. 2 – Impact on Built Heritage

In addition to the above, the issue of Appropriate Assessment Screening is addressed in Section 9 of this report and the Water Framework Directive is addressed within Section 10 of this report.

8.2. Reason for Refusal No. 1 – Principle of Development and Impact on Visual Amenity

- 8.2.1. Donegal County Council's 1st reason for refusal relates to the impact of the development on the visual amenity of the area. The reason for refusal outlines the following:

The subject site is located in the rural townland of Laraghirril categorised as an area of Moderate Scenic Amenity, (Policy L-P-2 states, 'to protect areas identified as 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity', County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan'.

Having regard to (i) the proposed location of the development, outside of and removed from any existing farmyard complex within the control of the applicant, (ii) the mass and scale of the structure proposed relative to existing vernacular structures south-east of the site, and minimal alterations in terms of location and siting relative to the previous refusal permission, planning ref: 25/61235 refers and (iii) restricted site boundaries which prevent for consideration of relocating to a more appropriate setting, it is considered that the proposed development would result in a haphazard form of development which would lead to unnecessary scarring and would detract from the quality of this landscape. To permit development as proposed would materially contravene the aforementioned policy and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Principle of Development

- 8.2.2. The application seeks permission for construction of a dry agricultural shed and connection to existing services at Laraghirril, Culdaff. The appeal site is located within a rural area outside of any designated settlement boundary. The subject site is

located within an area designated as 'Structurally Weak Rural Area' as identified within Map 6.3.1 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 Rural Area Types. Section 6.3.4 of the Plan outlines that all new development within the County, including rural housing developments, must have regard to the specific landscape classification, in terms of integration and assimilation of development into the receiving landscape.

- 8.2.3. The planning authority's reason for refusal raises concern in relation to the location of the shed outside any designated farmyard complex within the control of the applicant and outlines that the development would result in a haphazard form of development. The appeal site is currently in agricultural use and there are currently no agricultural buildings on the site. The application cover letter sets out a rationale for the development. This outlines that the applicant and his father have invested in the purchase of land and livestock over recent years with plans to increase their livestock and require a number of agricultural sheds in different locations. Figure 1 of the appeal includes an extract from Land Direct which illustrates the landholding within the vicinity of the appeal site within the ownership of the applicant.
- 8.2.4. The first party appeal outlines that the planning authority's decision has resulted in a situation where the applicant has to drive 5 miles to his farmyard with tractor and trailer every time, he wants to get fertiliser, posts, wiring, maintenance, equipment, machinery to the site. During harvest time he would have to transport bales of hay, straw or crop back to his farmyard. The appeal refers to road safety and emissions associated with travelling to and from the site. I am satisfied that the applicant has provided a sufficient rationale for the development.
- 8.2.5. Objective EDO-03 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 supports appropriately scaled and located rural economic development projects where they are functionally related to the countryside. As such, I consider the development of an agricultural shed on lands in agricultural use to be functionally related to the rural area and consider the development to be acceptable in principle subject to scale, siting and amenity considerations. Policy ED-P-9 of the CDDP sets out criteria to be considered for economic development proposals in rural areas. Such criteria include compatibility with surrounding landuses, and landscape character and appropriate

boundary treatment and access arrangements as addressed further in this assessment.

- 8.2.6. I note the reference within the reason for refusal to the planning history pertaining to the site under PA Ref: 2561238 wherein DCC issued a decision to refuse permission for an agricultural shed on the site. I have considered the subject application on its individual merits.

Impact on Visual Amenity

- 8.2.7. Donegal County Council's 1st reason for refusal outlines that the proposal by reason of location, mass and scale would materially contravene Policy L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan. Policy L-P-2 of the Plan seeks: *'to protect areas identified as 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' on Map 11.1 'Scenic Amenity'. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan'*.
- 8.2.8. In terms of landscape value, the County Development Plan sets out the following classifications:
1. Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity
 2. Areas of High Scenic Amenity
 3. Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity
- 8.2.9. The site is located within an area designated of Moderate Scenic Amenity within Map 11.1 of County Development Plan 2024-2030. The Development Plan outlines that these are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. The Plan outlines that these areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan. Map 11.1 of the County Development Plan identifies views and prospects of special amenity value. There are no protected views or prospects within the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 8.2.10. The proposed shed has a floor area of c. 180.42sq.m, a FFL of 99.4m, external dimensions of c. 19.4m by 9.3m and a ridge height of c. 7m. The proposal includes a planting scheme of native trees to all boundaries of the site. In terms of proposed

materials, the application drawings illustrate a shed of standard construction materials such as corrugated steel sheeting to the roof and upper wall levels and concrete block to lower wall level.

- 8.2.11. The first party appeal outlines that agricultural sheds are a characteristic feature of the rural area and refers to the existing larger scale agricultural sheds within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site including the existing shed to the south west of the site. The appeal outlines that the scale and format of development reflect the character of a rural area and the pattern of development within the area. The appeal furthermore refers to the exemptions for agricultural buildings as set out within the Planning and Development Regulations which permit structures of up to 300 sq.m.
- 8.2.12. I do not consider the scale and height of the structure to be excessive for an agricultural shed within a rural area, nor do I consider that the structure would form a dominant or prominent feature in the surrounding landscape. I consider that by reason of the height, scale and finished floor level of the shed in conjunction with the proposed boundary treatment, the proposed development will integrate sufficiently within the surrounding landscape. I consider that the proposed finishes are simple in format and reflect those present within the vicinity of the site.
- 8.2.13. The reason for refusal furthermore raises concern in relation to the scale and mass of the proposed structure relative to the existing vernacular buildings to the southeast of the site. I note the presence of the single storey vernacular buildings and entrance to the southeast of the site. These collection of buildings are visible intermittently from the L1291-1. I consider that the proposed shed is sufficiently set back from same to negate against any undue visual or residential amenity impacts. By reason of the nature of the shed for agricultural use in a rural area, the proposed planting scheme, existing site boundaries and the separation distance to the existing dwelling, I consider that the proposed development would not have any undue impact on the residential or visual amenity of this property.
- 8.2.14. I do not consider that the orientation, siting and location of the proposed shed would result in a development which would be detrimental to the residential or visual amenity or local character of the area. Nor do I consider that the development would constitute haphazard development. I am therefore satisfied that the development will

not result in an adverse impact on the visual or scenic amenity of the area, consistent with Objective L-O-1 and Policy L-P-2 of the County Development Plan.

Consideration of Material Contravention

8.2.15. I note the reference to material contravention of Policy L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan. As per my assessment above, I do not consider that the development represents a scale or format of development which would materially contravene Policy L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan as cited within the Planning Authority's decision. I consider that the proposal both integrates with and reflects the character and amenity of the rural landscape in which it is located. I consider that the reference to material contravention of Policy L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan is misplaced in this particular instance.

8.3. Reason for Refusal No. 2: Impact on Built Heritage

8.3.1. Donegal County Council's 2nd reason for refusal outlines the following:

The siting, reorientation and design of the proposed development, within 75m of an occupied vernacular farmhouse and associated stone outbuildings form a collection of vernacular structures that contribute positively to the architectural heritage and character of the rural landscape. The siting of the proposed agricultural shed in close proximity to the vernacular farm holding would materially contravene the objectives and policies of Chapter 11 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024–2030, specifically Objective AH-O-1, and Policy AH-P-9, which seek to protect, conserve and preserve vernacular structures, historic building stock and enhance the established character, forms, material features, and settings of vernacular buildings and historic building stock that are considered to be intrinsic elements of the character of a place.

The proposed development would erode local character and the historic landscape and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.3.2. The Planning Authority's 2nd reason for refusal raises concern in relation to the impact of the proposed development on the existing vernacular farmhouse and associated stone outbuildings to the southeast of the site. The proposed agricultural dry shed is located approx. 75m from a vernacular small farm holding consisting of a

single storey cottage and several stone outbuildings centred around a yard. The existing access road to the cottage is screened with mature trees. The farmhouse and associated structures are visible intermittently from the L-1291-1. The buildings are not designated as Protected Structures within the Record of Protected Structures set out within the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 or listed on the NIAH.

8.3.3. A third-party submission on the application from the owner of this property was made in respect of the application. The submission details the history of the structure, which dates from the 1800's and proposed conservation works. The submission outlines that the scale, bulk and height of the proposed shed would be inconsistent with the modest domestic of the adjoining buildings.

8.3.4. The policies and objectives of County Donegal Development Plan including Objective AH-O-1 and Policy AH-P-9 seek to protect the character and setting of vernacular buildings within the County as detailed below.

- Objective AH-O-1: Conserve, manage, protect and enhance the architectural heritage of Donegal namely Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, NIAH structures, designed landscapes and historic gardens, vernacular, historic building stock industrial and maritime built heritage, character and setting of such structures.
- Policy AH-P-9: Seek to protect, conserve and preserve vernacular structures, historic building stock and enhance the established character, forms, material features, and settings of vernacular buildings and historic building stock that are considered to be intrinsic elements of the character of a place, save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including, but not restricted to, the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, the Bridgend to County border project scheme, the Bunrana Inner Relief Road and Greenways., including:
 - a. Vernacular and traditional style farmhouse buildings including Clachans and local authority labourer's cottages.
 - b. Vernacular buildings, groupings of buildings on Donegal's Islands.
 - c. Historic thatch structures as a key component of the built heritage of the county.

d. Historic Building Stock such as traditionally stone built buildings.

This policy will be implemented by the Council in so far as same can be practicably and reasonably achieved within the context of said projects.

- 8.3.5. Donegal County Council's decision outlines that the proposed development would materially contravene the aforementioned provisions of the Development Plan. The first party appeal outlines that agricultural sheds are a characteristic feature of the rural environment and that the proposed shed is located over 70m from the farmhouse and farm buildings and has a buffer zone comprising of mature trees.
- 8.3.6. The proposal comprises the construction of a dry agricultural shed with a gross floor area of 180.43 sq.m. and a height of 7m. The site is located within an existing rural area which is characterised by agricultural landholdings and associated structures (including agricultural sheds) and rural houses. I do not consider that the shed is of a height or scale which would form a dominant or visually discordant feature in the landscape. While the proposed shed is higher than the existing single storey vernacular buildings to the southeast, I note that it is located over 75m from the adjoining property and outbuildings and separated by mature planting. The proposed shed is located within the vicinity of the existing access road to the property which is screened with mature planting. On review of the application drawings and having carried out a site visit, I do not consider that the proposed shed is of a scale or format of development which would negatively impact on the overall character or setting of the existing vernacular buildings or jeopardise the conservation and enhancement of these structures.
- 8.3.7. I do not consider that the development by reason of its siting, orientation and design would materially contravene Objective AH-O-1 or Policy AH-P-9 of the County Donegal Development Plan or erode local character and landscape of the area. I consider that the reference to material contravention of Objective AH-O-1 or Policy AH-P-9 of the County Donegal Development Plan, within the planning authority's 2nd reason for refusal, is misplaced in this instance.

8.4. **Other Issues**

Access

8.4.1. Access to the development is proposed via the existing agricultural laneway from the L-1291-1. This road serves the applicant's landholding, the existing agricultural shed to the southwest and dwelling to the southeast. The application drawings (Site Location Map) illustrate sightlines of 90m from the access road onto the L-1291-1. I note that the no objection has been raised from the Roads Department in DCC to the proposed access arrangements subject to conditions. I am satisfied that access arrangements are acceptable and that the number of vehicle trips generated by the existing farm is unlikely to have a significant impact on the capacity of the adjoining road network.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. The appeal site is not located within or immediately adjacent to a designated site. The nearest designated sites to the appeal site include the North Inishowen Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002012) located c. 1.9km north of the site, 2.8km to the east. There are no watercourses within the appeal site. The nearest watercourse is the Culdaff_010 located c. 900m to the south of the appeal site and the Culdaff_20 is located c.1.2km to the north. The proposed development seeks permission for a dry agricultural shed and connection to existing services. The Site Layout Map outlines that surface water will be collected in gullies and discharged to an existing open drain.
- 9.2. In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on any European sites in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required. This determination is based on:
- The nature of the development
 - The rural location of the site

- Compliance with the GAP Regulations and associated standard pollution controls that would be employed regardless of proximity to a European site and effectiveness of same
- The separation distance from nearest European site
- The lack of a direct or indirect pathway to any designated site;

9.3. It is noted that the Planning Authority also concluded that having regard to the nature of the development and the lack of any pathway to a European site the development would not be likely to have a significant effect on any designated site.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

- 10.1. The appeal site is located within the rural area of Laraghiirril. No watercourses area identified in the immediate vicinity of the site within EPA mapping. The site is located within the Culdaff_20 River Sub Basin (IE_NW_40C020150). This watercourse is located c. 1.2km to the northwest of the site. The Culdaff_20 watercourse was designated a Moderate WFD Status in the period 2016-2021 and a Good WDF Status in 2019-2024. The watercourse is identified as being Not at Risk during the 2019-2024 Monitoring period.
- 10.2. The ground waterbody underlying the site is the East Inishowen ground waterbody (IEGBNI-NW-G-050). This waterbody had a Good WFD status in the 2019-2024 period. The waterbody is identified as being Not at Risk over the 2019-2024 Monitoring period.
- 10.3. The proposed development seeks to connect to existing services. The Site Layout Map outlines that surface water will be collected in gullies and discharged to an existing open drain. Donegal County Council have no objection to the development on water quality impacts subject to compliance with conditions. The submission on file from the Loughs Agency furthermore raises no objection to the development subject to adherence to good agricultural practice. I am satisfied that such matters can be addressed via condition in the instance that the Commission is minded to grant permission for the development.
- 10.4. An assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken with regard to the objectives set out in Article 4 of the EU Water Framework Directive.

- 10.5. 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.
- 10.6. 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.
- 10.7. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with the requirements of Article 4.

11.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission is granted for the development in accordance with the following reasons and considerations.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the location of the development within a rural area and the provisions of Objective ED-O-3 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 which supports the development of agriculture it is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would be acceptable and would not be a scale or format of development which would seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity or erode the built heritage or rural landscape character of the area. The development would not result in a deterioration of water quality and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would be in accordance with Policy L-P-2, Objective AH-O-1 and Policy AH-P-9 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and would 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, 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 and the development shall be retained and completed in accordance with the agreed particular.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The building shall be used for dry agricultural/horticultural storage and associated purposes only. The building shall not be used for human habitation or any commercial purpose other than a purpose incidental to farming/horticulture, whether or not such use might otherwise constitute exempted development.

Reason: In the interest of orderly development and the amenities of the area.

3. Site access arrangements, and the provision and maintenance of visibility splays, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works.

Reason: In the interests of road safety.

3. Water supply and drainage arrangements for the site, including the disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. Drainage details shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and public health.

4. In the event of an accidental spillage of wastewater, organic fertiliser, fuel, machine oil or any other substance which may threaten the quality of any watercourse or groundwater body either at construction or operational phase, the Planning Authority and Inland Fisheries Ireland, shall be notified as soon as is practicable. A copy of the clean-up plan shall be submitted to the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

5. 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 An Bord Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

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.

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.”

Stephanie Farrington

Senior Planning Inspector

2nd of June 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL 500951-DL-26
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of a dry agricultural shed with connection to all existing services
Development Address	Laraghirril, Culdaff, Lifford Po, Co. Donegal
IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX / OR LEAVE BLANK	
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required.
(For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	
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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	

<p>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?</p>	
<p><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.</p>	<p>The proposed development 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</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)</p>	
<p>4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?</p>	
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)</p>

No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: _____