



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-501601-GC-26

Development

for the change of use of an existing Order of Malta community building to a guesthouse, the amalgamation of this building with the adjoining guesthouse at No.19 St. Helen's Street, the construction of a new pitched roof, the provision of 4 no. en-suite guest bedrooms, associated internal alterations, minor elevational changes to the front and side elevations and all ancillary and associated works

Location

20 St. Helen's Street , Galway ,
Co.Galway

Planning Authority

Galway City Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

2660118

Applicant(s)

The Lion's Tower Limited

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse Permission

Type of Appeal	First Party Normal Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	The Lion's Tower Limited
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	27 August 2026
Inspector	Sandra Eapen

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal is made in relation to a site measuring c.0.007 ha situated at No. 20 St. Helen's Street, located less than c.1km from Galway City centre. The subject site contains a 2 storey, semi-detached building with a stated floor area of c.114sqm. The red-line site boundary only includes the footprint of existing building at No. 20 St. Helen's Street. No blue line has been indicated to demonstrate applicant's control over surrounding lands.
- 1.2. The building is setback from the street by c.4.5m and has limited openings along the front elevation. There is a double yellow line along St. Helen Street, indicating no on-street parking. A few of the neighbouring dwellings have in-curtilage parking provided behind the footpath.
- 1.3. The site locality can be characterised as an established suburban neighbourhood. To the north of the site the subject building addresses a driveway of an existing residential building and to its south the building addresses a 3-storey, town house. The subject building was previously used as a community facility and is currently vacant.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Permission is being sought for the change of use of the existing building at No. 20 St. Helen's Street to a guesthouse and for the amalgamation of the building with adjoining building at No. 19 St. Helen's Street.
- 2.2. Works proposed on subject site, No. 20 St. Helen's Street, includes a new pitched roof section to the front at a ridge height of c.8m, internal alterations to the existing floor plan to provide for 4 no. guest bedrooms (approximately c.10sqm, c.12sqm, c.16sqm and c.17sqm), elevational changes to the front and side elevations (including insertion of 2 no. windows to the front and 3 no. windows to the side), and all associated site development works.

- 2.3. Revised proposals have been submitted at appeal stage to address the refusal reason. The applicant has indicated a new reception and management area within the footprint of adjoining building, No 19 St Helen's Street.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

- 3.1.1. Galway City Council refused permission for the development (dated 29/05/2026). Refusal reason stated is given below:

"1. On the basis of the information submitted, the Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposed development would operate as a managed guesthouse with individually let rooms and on-site supervision. In addition, in the absence of a clearly identified reception/management area or robust operational details, it is considered that the use would likely, in practice, function as an extension of intensive short-term letting of the property (or substantial parts of it), as the development proposes amalgamation with No.19 St. Helen's Street, which the application details confirm operates as a short term let premises, which does not have the benefit of planning permission. Therefore, if permitted as proposed, the development would lead to the further extension of an unauthorised use.

Furthermore, such a use would materially differ from the supporting "guesthouse/B&B" use envisaged under Section 11.2.8 Residential R Land Use Zoning Objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029, which seeks to protect existing residential amenity and the primary residential function of R-zoned neighbourhoods. It would also conflict with the objectives of the Galway City Development Plan Housing Strategy to implement national legislation on short-term letting to prevent negative impacts on housing supply, with a presumption against allowing such uses, to avoid an over-concentration of short-term letting in the city, having regard to Galway's status as a rent pressure zone.

The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the Residential (R) zoning set out under Section 11.2.8 and to Policy 3.1(23) of the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029, would be injurious to residential amenity and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area."

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports dated 22/05/2026 is the basis for the decision. The main issues discussed in the report are summarised below:

- With regard to the proposed amalgamation of No.20 with No. 19 St Helen's Street, the adjoining site has not been outlined in red or blue in the application drawing. The site location map has limited detail.
- The site is located within Residential – R zoning which allows for guesthouses and B&B accommodation and 'inner city residential area' within the Development Plan.
- Insufficient information has been provided with regard to applicant's control over No. 19 St Helen's Street and is not indicated within the red/blue line to consider the proposed amalgamation of units and how it will be operated if permission is granted.
- Only claim to historic use submitted with regard to No. 19 (adjoining building) and no information has been provided with regard to the current use. The current use (from 2016) is evidently short-term letting which is unauthorised.
- The layout provided does not show any reception area or signage. If permission is granted, the Planning Authority considers potential for both units to be used for short-term letting, contrary to objectives of CDP which aims to prevent uses that negatively impact the housing supply.
- With regard to the works proposed for No 20 (subject site), the proposed design is acceptable and considers the proposal to represent a sensitive adaptation of the existing structure, ensure continuous use and upkeep of the buildings.
- There is a shortfall in the parking provision for the combined development. The street has significant parking pressure. Unmanaged short-term letting use can exacerbate parking and traffic issues.

- The existing shared yard could function as an outdoor amenity space for the guesthouse or other operational requirements.
- The proposed development is largely within the building envelope of No. 20 only external change being new pitched roof. The height of the building is comparable to surrounding structures. None of the new upper storey windows would result in direct overlooking on neighbouring gardens.
- Permission was recommended to be refused as the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence to show that the property will be operated as a guesthouse with on-site supervision and will exacerbate the current unauthorised short-term letting at No. 19.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Active Travel Office: No objection to the proposal. St Helens street is identified as a secondary feeder cycle route where future calming and cycling measures will be proposed.
- Drainage Section: No objection subject to standard conditions.
- Architectural Conservation Office: Design proposed is sympathetic to adjoining dwellings and retention of side wall is welcome. If permission is granted timber sliding sash windows and natural slate roof should be used.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

No response on file

3.4. Third Party Observations

1 no. third-party observation was made at the application stage. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

- Development will add to the pressure on local parking infrastructure and thereby negatively impact adjoining residential amenities.
- Friday and Saturday evenings residents are finding it difficult to find any parking in their residents parking zone.

- If permission is granted, existing parking should be safeguarded as residents only, review street layout to allow for perpendicular parking along Eglington Canal, discourage multi-car households, prohibit commercial vehicles from using resident's car parking, review parking zones, campaign to reform parking habits of residents.

4.0 Planning History

S.I. 75 of 2022 Exemption Notification made on 29 April 2024, by Ryan and Associates the stated owners of No.20 (subject site), with regard to a change of use from commercial to residential use under Article 6(a) of the Planning Regulations, on the basis that the property has been vacant for 4 years. The site plan indicated No. 20 in the red line and No.19 in blue line.

Derelict Sites Register Section 8(2) notice dated 12 August 2026 was observed as erected on site notifying the owners that the site has been entered into the register.

With regard to adjoining site No. 19 Saint Helen's Street the following applications are relevant to the subject application:

Reg. Ref. 20.10 – Retention permission granted (dated 04 June 2020) to Ryan and Associates acting on behalf of Eoghain Ryan for the front boundary wall and railing at No. 19. The application details state the site as in use as a private dwelling.

Other Hotel, guesthouse, BnB applications within site vicinity

Reg. Ref. 07.667 - Permission granted for a hotel development of 136 suite rooms at Connaught Laundry Site across from subject site at No.8 St. Helen Street. Extension of permission granted in 2014. The site remains undeveloped.

Reg. Ref. 00.400 – Permission granted for a 19-bedroom student and tourist accommodation at No. 58 Henry Street. Currently operating as Donegan Court.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1 Galway City Development Plan 2023-29

- 5.1.1. The Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029 (CDP) provides the overarching policy framework for the assessment of this application. The subject site is zoned Residential – ‘R’ in the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-29 with an objective to *“To provide for residential development and for associated support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods.”* Higher density residential developments are accepted in principle under the subject zoning.
- 5.1.2. Section 11.1 - Land Use Zoning Objectives and Development Standards – Extensions or improvements of legally established uses existing in locations that do not confirm to the designated land use zoning will be considered where the proposed development would not be injurious to amenities of the area and would not prejudice the proper planning and sustainable development.
- 5.1.3. As per Table 11.2.8 under ‘R’ Residential Zoning - Hotel, Guesthouses, Hostels and B&Bs are uses which may be considered for their contribution to the zoning objective, depending on the location and scale of the development.
- 5.1.4. The site is located within the ‘Inner Residential Area’ as per Section 3.7 of the Development Plan. New and infill developments in ‘Inner Residential Areas’ are required to respond positively to the character of these areas, appropriately scaled and designed to protect the amenity of existing and future residents. It is noted that the site is located outside the designated Shantalla Area in Section 3.7, Figure 3.5.
- 5.1.5. As per Section 11.11.1 A reduction in car-parking requirements may be acceptable when an application for development includes a Travel Plan, details on options for sustainable modes and/or demonstrates options for alternative methods of dealing with traffic generation associated with the proposed development. For developments located within the ‘Inner Residential Areas’ where parking is not being provided, applicants are required to demonstrate that alternative provisions are sufficient to ensure no adverse traffic impact of the development. This may include, the provision of cycling infrastructure, public transport access within a 10- or 15-minute walk from the development or access to other active travel modes.
- 5.1.6. Table 11.6 Parking Space Requirement (maximums)– for Guesthouses/BnBs is 1 space per bedroom.

- 5.1.7. Section 11.11.4 Cycle Parking – a minimum of one cycle stand per 20 car parking space is required.
- 5.1.8. Policy 6.8 Tourism Sector -Recognises the significant contribution of tourism to the local economy and seeks to support a sustainable range of tourism accommodation and related facilities.
- 5.1.9. Policy 3.1 Housing Strategy (item 23) - Ensure the provisions of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 and any other future legislation and guidelines are applied where planning permission is required to control short-term letting accommodation to prevent a negative impact on housing supply and /or an over-concentration of such uses. Notwithstanding this, where planning consent is required under legislation for short-term letting, there will be a presumption against allowing such a use in view of the status of the city defined as a rent pressure zone.

5.4 Natural Heritage Designations

The site is located c.350m from Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code 000297) and c.1km from Galway Bay Complex SAC (Site Code 000268) and Inner Galway Bay SPA (Site Code 004031). Galway Bay Complex a proposed NHA (site code 000268) is also located c.1km from the site.

6.0 EIA Screening

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

This is a first party appeal against the decision of the Planning Authority to refuse permission. The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

Lawfully established use of No. 19

- It is submitted that the guesthouse use of No. 19 is lawfully established use by reason of continuous operation for over 50 years. The applicant refers to Kildare County Council v. Goode [1999] 2 IR 495, where a use following the expiry of the limitation period is characterised as lawful. The Planning Authority has no power to refuse permission for development ancillary or consequential upon a use that is immune from enforcement.
- The applicant has stated that the building was in use as a guest house from 1976-2007, following which it was vacant from 2007 – 2016, and in the years following the building was in continuous use as visitor accommodation from 2016 to present. The use was clearly never abandoned.

Development is a managed guesthouse

- The applicant claims that the guesthouse has individually let rooms, on site supervision, and registered with Failte Ireland. Revised drawings submitted include reception and management area.
- The lack of reception area could have been addressed via a Further Information request. The applicant was not given the opportunity to address any shortcomings in the proposal.
- The guesthouse/BnB use is acceptable under Residential R zoning and open for consideration, therefore, refusal is unfounded. Policy 3.1.(23) seeks to prevent proliferation of unregulated short-term lettings.

Physical characteristics of No. 20 unsuitable to be an independent dwelling

- The 2no. sites share a common history and integrated origin. No. 20 side elevation addresses the rear yard of No. 19 which renders No. 20 to be unsuitable as an independent residence.

- No 20 would not satisfy the residential standards – open space and internal configuration, as an independent residence. Therefore, an amalgamation of the two adjoining buildings is more feasible.

Visitor accommodation need for University Hospital Galway (UHG)

- Subject site is located within walking distance of the UHG. There is a shortfall in hotels, registered guesthouses in this area to manage visitor accommodation needs of families visiting patients in UHG. NPF and RSES recognises and supports the development of visitor accommodation at appropriate locations.

Car Parking

- No. 19 and 20 has been operating without a dedicated car park for many years. Therefore, the development cannot be refused on the absence of car parking provision. Similar developments have been permitted with no car parking – E.g. cited The Aloft Hotel, Bohermore (ABP 319670)

Absence of Further Information Request

- If the Planning Authority had concerns material to the determination of the application, this should have been clarified by way of Further Information.
- The applicant contends that had further information been requested - revised design proposal to include a reception area, details of operational management etc, pre-registration details with Failte Ireland and further evidence of historic use of No. 19 could have been furnished.

Other

- Conditions recommended to restrict the operation of the building as a managed guesthouse, requiring registration, and use of a reception area.
- The appellant has stated that the following additional documents have been included in the appeal. However, only items 1 and 3 were submitted.
 - 1) Statutory Declaration from person with direct knowledge of previous use of No. 19;
 - 2) AirBnB letting records from 2016 onwards for No.19;

- 3) Revised Architectural Drawings showing reception area;
- 4) Photographs of No. 19 and 20 showing boundary and rear yard;
- 5) Failte Ireland Guesthouse standards requirements for registration,
- 6) Aloft Hotel Bohermore - ACP Case Ref 319670,
- 7) Extract of Development Plan regarding R zoning objective, Section 11.2.8 and Policy 3.1.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

None on file.

7.3. Observations

None on file

7.4. Further Responses

None on file.

8.0 Assessment

Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the report of the local authority made at application stage, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues to be considered in this appeal to be the following:

- Procedural Issues
- Principle of Development and Change of Use
- Design and Residential Amenity
- Other Matters

8.1. Procedural Issues

- 8.1.1. Article 22 Requirements: The applicant, Lion's Tower Ltd. c/o Ryan and Associates (agent) only state the site address as No. 20 St. Helen's Street in the statutory notices. The site location and site layout maps submitted only includes the building envelope of the existing building at No. 20 St. Helen's Street in the application red line boundary and there is no blue line boundary showing the extent of applicants control over adjoining lands, including No. 19. A letter of consent by Mr. Eoghan Ryan (owner of No. 19 as per Reg. Ref. 20/10 and director of Lion's Tower Ltd.) gives permission to Ryan and Associates to submit planning application in relation to No.19 St. Helen's Street. The Commission shall note that the previously submitted S.I. 75 of 2022 Exemption Notification made by Ryan and Associates in relation to No.20 on 29 April 2024, included No. 19 in the blue line boundary. Article 22(2)(b) (i, ii) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended, requires all land/structure to which the application relates to be indicated with a red boundary and all adjacent lands in control of the applicant to be indicated with a blue boundary. All works proposed outside the site boundaries (red line) would not form part of the subject application as they don't comply with the requirements of Article 22.
- 8.1.2. Missing information: It is also noted that the applicant refers to records of AirBnB bookings from 2016, photographs of the rear yard and Failte Ireland requirements for registration of guesthouse in the grounds of appeal statement, however, these were not included in the documentation. Planning Authority in their response to appeal has confirmed that they have no records of AirBnB bookings for this site.

8.2. Principle of Development and Change of Use

- 8.2.1. Zoning Objective: The proposed development is located in an area zoned as 'R-Residential' in the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-29. The objective for which is "to provide for residential development and for associated support development, which will ensure the protection of existing residential amenity and will contribute to sustainable residential neighbourhoods". The proposal is for the change of use of vacant community building (at No. 20) to a guesthouse and the amalgamation of the building with adjoining guesthouse at No. 19. Hotel,

Guesthouses, Hostels and B&Bs are listed under Section 11.2.8 of the Development Plan as uses which may be considered for their contribution to the zoning objective of 'R' land use zoning category, depending on the location and scale of the development. Therefore, the principle of a guesthouse use may be acceptable at this site subject to detailed considerations as set out below.

8.2.2. Existing use: In 2024, Ryan and Associates, had notified the Planning Authority of their intent to change the use of No. 20 St Helen Street from office use to residential use under the planning exemptions given under– S.I. No. 75 of 2022 Planning and Development Exempted Regulations, 2022. Additional fenestrations were proposed along the front and side elevations as part of the change of use. Internal alterations proposed were limited to the first floor, changing the existing meeting room and store at first floor into 2 no. bedrooms. However, the said works were not carried out in the relevant period, and the building has remained vacant.

8.2.3. The development includes the amalgamation of this building with the adjoining guesthouse at No.19 St. Helen's Street. The appeal grounds claim that the guesthouse is a legally established use at No 19, established for over 50 years and therefore should be considered as a non-conforming use. Applicant has submitted a statutory declaration from the granddaughter of previous owner as historical evidence for the use of building at No. 19 as a Bed and Breakfast (BnB) stating that the top floor of the building was used for visitor accommodation for at least 10 years prior to 2007 while the owner was still residing in the property. It is understood that following the death of the previous owner the property remained vacant from 2007 to 2016, succeeding which it has been in continuous use as AirBnB under the current owners.

The scale of letting, i.e. the no. of rooms and days let, are not clear from the submitted information. The Commission shall also note that the previous retention application lodged on No. 19 by Mr. Eoghan Ryan (Reg. Ref. 20/10) stated the site to be his residence. As per the most recent circular on Short Term Letting and The Planning System, Number SPI 01/2026, planning permission is not required for short-term letting within the 'principal private residence' of a person for providing overnight accommodation and breakfast for visitors at a small scale (less than 4 rooms are let in a house) where the host is present or is let for a cumulative period of up to 90 days/year where the host is not present. A change of use planning

permission is required for short-term letting use of a house or apartment that is not a 'principal private residence'. The continuous use of the building as a BnB/short-term letting would be materially different from the commercial/ guest house accommodation use stated and described in the site notices which would generally have regular supervision and maintenance by staff stationed on site. Although the appellants argue that the building has been in use as guesthouse for more than 7 years, no AirBnB records have been provided to support this claim. There is insufficient evidence submitted in the application demonstrating that the building at No. 19 was in authorised use as a commercial guesthouse or in such use for more than 7 years to consider the proposed development under the provisions of Section 11.1 of the Development Plan as a non-conforming use. I do not consider the historic B&B use described in the applicant's documentation to be equivalent to the use currently being carried out on the site. For the purpose of this planning assessment, reliance is placed on the applicants' own statements on the file which confirm that no. 19 is in use as short-term letting AirBnB.

8.2.4. Proposed change of use: There is no merit in assessing the proposed change of use of subject site- No. 20, from vacant community building to guesthouse use, independently, as the proposal does not include any shared facilities such as kitchen, lounge or other residential amenity areas for the guests. There is insufficient information in the application to determine the status of the existing visitor accommodation use at adjoining site No. 19 St. Helen's Street to consider the proposed change of use of No. 20 which will enable the proposed extension of use at No. 19. It can be concluded that the proposed guesthouse use on subject site (No. 20) can only be facilitated with a change of use of both units. As the application site boundary only includes No. 20 the change of use of adjacent unit, No. 19, is outside the remit of this application.

8.2.5. Proposed amalgamation: The applicant has proposed the amalgamation of No. 20 (4 no. guest rooms) with the existing guesthouse at adjoining site No. 19 St. Helen's Street (6 no. rooms). The Planning Authority speculates that the proposed amalgamated unit is most likely to remain as un-regulated, short-term letting use which is materially different from the guesthouse/BnB use envisaged for R-Residential zoning. In the grounds of appeal, the applicant has stated that the converted building No. 20 St. Helen's Street will function as a managed guest house,

with individually let bedrooms, onsite supervision and will be registered with Failte Ireland.

- 8.2.6. As per the Tourist Traffic Acts, tourism businesses calling itself a guesthouse are required to register with Failte Ireland and is required to meet specific quality and operational standards. While not a planning requirement, the applicant has not demonstrated compliance with the Failte Ireland standards showing that the premises can be satisfactorily adapted or operated as a regulated guesthouse. The proposal for change of use from vacant community building to guesthouse at No. 20 does not include any dedicated supporting services/facilities such as bin store areas, dining/living areas or private amenity areas. It is not clear therefore that the proposed change of use can operate satisfactorily on its own merits without the proposed amalgamation with adjoining unit. Since the proposed use of No. 20 cannot function independently and as the existing status of No. 19 has not been established it would be inappropriate to grant permission to the proposed amalgamation of these units. The proposed amalgamation of No.20 with No.19 would therefore be considered contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- 8.2.7. Policy 3.1 Restriction to short-term letting: The Development Plan, in compliance with the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act, aims to control short-term letting in the city to prevent negative impact to housing supply and over concentration of such uses. Housing Strategy Policy 3.1 (item 23) of the Development Plan denotes a presumption against allowing short-term letting uses in the city. The applicant has not provided a specific response to Policy 3.1 in the application or appeal documentation. It is acknowledged that the building is not part of the existing housing stock and therefore the proposed change of use would not result in a negative impact on the housing supply.
- 8.2.8. There are a number of established visitor accommodations uses such as hotels, hostel accommodations, guest house and bed & breakfast uses within proximity of the site. If permitted the proposed change of use of No. 20 and amalgamation with No. 19 will result in a 10-bedroom accommodation use which has a possibility to intensify the existing short-term letting at this location. It cannot be determined, from the submitted information, whether the proposed development would comply with Policy 3.1 of the Development Plan which aims to restrict short-term letting use in the city.

8.3. Design and Residential Amenity

- 8.3.1. Change to elevations: The existing building currently only has one window along its front elevation addressing St. Helen's Street. The proposal seeks permission to insert 2 no. additional windows along the front elevation and for the repositioning/widening of an existing window here. The proposed window openings are proportionate with the existing fenestration along the front elevation of No. 19. I consider the proposed changes to enhance the street elevation of the existing building while providing a sensitive response to the established street frontage of adjoining buildings along St. Helen's Street. Additional windows are also proposed along the eastern side elevation that addresses the rear shared courtyard, to the rear of No. 19. The applicant has proposed to include 3 no. new windows here (2 no. at first floor level and 1 no. at ground level) and to replace an existing window at ground level with a new doorway opening to the shared courtyard. No new window openings are proposed along the western side of the building which has masonry finishes. This is considered acceptable as the western elevation directly address residential amenities of adjoining sites.
- 8.3.2. Changes are also proposed to the roof of the building. Part of the building addressing the street is proposed to have a new pitched roof section with a gable end to the side at a ridge height of c.8m while the remaining flat roof section to the rear is to be retained at a parapet height of c.5.7m. The proposed finishes for the new gable end along the western elevation is not clear from the submitted drawings. The depth of the new pitched roof section will match the depth of upper floor levels of No. 19. The height and design of the new roof is acceptable and respects the established character of the street.
- 8.3.3. Internal floor changes: Internal alterations proposed include removal of existing wall partitions to provide for 4 no. double bedrooms (approximately c.10sqm, c.12sqm, c.16sqm and c.17sqm) and attached ensuite bathrooms within the ground and first floor space. One of the ground floor bedrooms is indicated to be disabled friendly. Some of the proposed bedrooms do not meet the minimum floor area and minimum room width requirements for a double bedroom as per the Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities, 2007. In addition, some bedrooms are only provided with 1 no. window that is less than c.1m wide. While not planning standards or guidelines

it is noteworthy that Failte Ireland requires a registered guesthouse to have a minimum of seven guest bedrooms, with double bedrooms having a minimum size of 15sqm, each room to be provided with private ensuite, as well as a dedicated kitchen and lounge area (min. area of 20sqm). The applicant has not demonstrated that amalgamated premises in the proposed arrangement will meet the room size and floor area requirements for a statutory guesthouse. Overall, I am not satisfied that the internal layout would provide for satisfactory residential accommodation for its future users.

8.3.4. As noted previously, the submitted drawings do not include provisions for kitchen/dining or living areas within subject site No. 20. All of the shared facilities and living areas are provided within adjoining unit No. 19 which is outside the red line boundary for the application. The shared yard at the rear is also not included in the red / blue line boundary. The proposed development on subject application site No. 20, when considered independent of No. 19 (third party lands), has no associated amenity space, no service areas, and no independent living/kitchen areas. The internal alterations and proposed guesthouse use is unfeasible considering the limited scope of the application site. I do not see any merit in resolving the said issues by way of condition as it would require material design changes and therefore recommend that permission be refused for the application.

8.3.5. Overshadowing/Overbearing/Overlooking: The proposed arrangement is unlikely to result in any additional overshadowing or overbearing issues to adjoining residential amenities. The revised fenestration arrangements to the front of the building are unlikely to result in any overlooking issues as it addresses the public road to the front. However, the additional windows for habitable spaces proposed to the side of the building are likely to result in overlooking issues onto adjoining building No. 19. Given the nature of established use at No. 19, the impacts are not considered to be significant in this instance.

8.3.6. Revised Arrangements: The applicant has provided a revised arrangement as part of the appeal. A new reception/management area is proposed within the entrance lobby/hallway of No. 19 St. Helen's Street. The changes are however located outside the subject site and the red line boundary submitted at the application stage. The proposed arrangement would constitute material changes to the application and therefore cannot be considered as part of the appeal process.

8.4. Other Matters

- 8.4.1. Omission of Car Parking: The proposed development does not include any provision for car or bicycle parking. The Development Plan parking standards given in Table 11.6 require parking provision (maximum standards) of 1no. space per bedroom at this location. Third party objections made at application stage note considerable pressure for on-street parking at this location. Planning Authority's assessment cites concerns regarding possible traffic and parking issues from the proposed intensification of unmanaged short-term letting use at the site. As per section 11.11.1 development located within 'Inner Residential Area' where parking is not provided has to demonstrate adequate alternate provisions to prevent adverse traffic impact. This may include, the provision of cycling infrastructure, public transport access within a 10- or 15-minute walk from the development or access to other active travel modes. The applicant has not provided an acceptable response to this policy such as a Mobility Management Plan or Travel Plan.
- 8.4.2. National Policy Objective 37 seeks to implement safe and convenient alternatives to car parking into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments. It is acknowledged that the site has good accessibility as the site is located at less than 1km from the city centre. Nearest bus stops are located at 400m from the site at Costello Road and at 550m of the site at Fr.Griffin Road. It is also noted that St. Helen's Street is identified in the Galway Transport Strategy as a future secondary/feeder cycle route. However, no bike parking provision has been made in the proposal. There is also no scope to provide bike parking in the current application site by means of a post consent compliance condition because of the restricted site boundary. Although there is space along the footpath to the front of No. 20 to provide for bike parking, it is not clear if the applicant has control over these lands. Although the omission of car parking could be considered at this location, in the absence of clearly set out measures to prioritise walking/cycling or alternate provisions for car parking, in this instance it cannot be determined if proposed development can operate without resulting in adverse traffic impacts to the locality. I therefore do not consider the omission of car and bike parking to be acceptable at this location as proposed in this application.

8.5. Conclusion

The proposed guesthouse accommodation uses at No. 20 St Helen's Street although allowed within the Residential 'R' zoning objective cannot be considered independent of the proposed amalgamation with adjoining site, No. 19 St. Helen's Street. Insufficient information has been submitted with the application to determine the nature or authorised status of visitor accommodation use at No. 19. Furthermore, the proposed development was found to be dependent on works located outside the subject application boundary and therefore cannot be considered under this application. It is recommended that permission be refused for the proposed development.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements of S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.
- 9.2. The site is located c.350m from Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code 000297) and c.1km from Galway Bay Complex SAC (Site Code 000268) and Inner Galway Bay SPA (Site Code 004031).
- 9.3. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European Site.
- 9.4. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:
- Scale and size of the proposed development within an existing urban setting.
 - The lack of connections to the SAC.
 - Connection to public water, drain and sewer.
- 9.5. 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 (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. 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.
- 10.3. 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.
- 10.4. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with the requirements of Article 4

11.0 Recommendation

- 11.1. I recommend that permission be REFUSED for the reasons and considerations set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having considered the information submitted with the application, the Commission is not satisfied that the existing premises at No. 20 could accommodate a guesthouse accommodation use as envisaged under the Residential 'R' zoning objective and Table 11.2.8 of the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-29, without significant revisions to the proposed development and in the absence of adequate operational management arrangements. Therefore, it cannot be determined that the proposed development would adhere to Policy 3.1 Housing Strategy (item 23) of the Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-29 which aims at restricting over-concentration of short-term letting use in the city. Furthermore, there is insufficient information in the application to determine the nature or status of the existing

guesthouse use at adjoining site No. 19 St. Helen's Street to consider the proposed amalgamation with subject application site. The development proposed would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way."

Sandra Eapen
Planning Inspector

28 September 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL- 501601 -GC- 26
Proposed Development Summary	Change of use and amalgamation with existing guesthouse on adjoining site. Internal alterations for the provision of 4 no. guest bedrooms and ancillary works at No. 20 St Helen's Street, Galway, Co. Galway
Development Address	20 St. Helen's Street, Galway, Co. Galway
IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX / OR LEAVE BLANK	
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	☐ 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)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	State the Class here
☒ 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?	
☒ 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. No Screening Required	State the Class and state the relevant threshold
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.	State the Class and state the relevant threshold

Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	
4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

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Inspector: Sandra Eapen

Date: 28 September 2026