



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-501628-MO-26

Development	Single storey dwellinghouse with new vehicular access and sewage treatment system with percolation area at Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.
Location	Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.
Planning Authority	Mayo County Council.
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	2660290.
Applicant(s)	Caroline Gaughan.
Type of Application	Permission.
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission.
Type of Appeal	First Party Normal Planning Appeal.
Appellant(s)	Caroline Gaughan.
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	21 st August 2026.
Inspector	C. Daly.

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site, of area 0.38ha., consists of part of a rectangular shaped grass field. The site is bounded on three sides by mature hedgerow and there is an agricultural gate adjacent to the public road. The grass was somewhat overgrown on the date of my visit.
- 1.2. The rural site, in a coastal area, is bounded by agricultural fields on three sides. There is a line of detached dwellings c.160m to the west and another group of dwellings c.260m to the south-west close to the headland. The site is c.0.75km to the south-west of the edge of a modest linear type grouping of dwellings. The nearest village is Bangor which is c.15.4km to the north-east.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development, in summary, consists of the following:
 - Single storey dwelling of 178.1sqm with pitched roof and front and rear projecting gable elements at the eastern side.
 - New vehicular access and sewage treatment system.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

- 3.1.1. Mayo County Council decided to refuse permission for one reason related to contravention of Objective RHO 4 as the proposal would constitute haphazard development in a scenic/coastal rural area and would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and would interfere with the character of the coastal landscape.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

- 3.2.1. The Planner's Report assessment noted the requirement to demonstrate compliance with Objective RHO 4 and the planning history where the applicant previously did not establish a housing need and where an alternative location cannot be considered. It

noted the failure to present documentary evidence that she resided in her father's home for 60 months over an 11 year period. It considered that the applicant had not lived in the area for a prolonged continuous period such that it failed to comply with Objective RHO 4 of the CDP.

- 3.2.2. The report noted the dwelling design to be in accordance with the Mayo Rural Housing Design Guidelines 2008. It noted the water supply and wastewater treatment arrangements. It considered the access to accord with DM Standard 7.6 of Volume 2 of the CDP.
- 3.2.3. The report concluded by recommending that permission be refused in relation to contravention of Rural Housing Objective RHO 4 of the CDP, that it would constitute haphazard development in a scenic/coastal rural area and would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and would interfere with the character of the coastal landscape.
- 3.2.4. Other Technical Reports
- None.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (natural heritage):
No response received.

3.4. Third Party Observations

One third party observation was received which can be summarised as follows:

- The size is excessive for a single storey house.
- The front boundary lacks a common area for parking/passing.
- Is the percolation area compliant with current regulations?
- The house should be re-sited in line with her property and another house on the other side of her house in keeping with recently developed sites.
- Views would be obscured by the 6.23m high ridge.

4.0 Planning History

Subject Site

2560207: Application withdrawn on behalf of Caroline Gaughan to construct a single storey dwellinghouse with new vehicular access and sewage treatment system with percolation area.

Sites in the Vicinity

06752: Permission granted by the P.A. at adjacent site to the west for the erection of a dwelling house, installation of a biofilter treatment plant and percolation area, site access onto public road. Not implemented.

991400: Permission granted by the P.A. at site c.40m to the west to construct dwellinghouse and proprietary effluent treatment unit. Not implemented.

96622: Permission refused by the P.A. at site across the road c.70m to the south-west to construct a house and septic tank. Not implemented.

96621: Permission refused by the P.A. at site across the road c.90m to the south-west to construct a house and septic tank. Not implemented.

97732: Permission refused by the P.A. at site across the road c.70m to the south-west to construct a house and septic tank. Not implemented.

97733: Permission refused by the P.A. at site across the road c.90m to the south-west to construct a house and septic tank. Not implemented.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 (the CDP)

Volume 1

Chapter 2 – Core and Settlement Strategy

Policy SSP 1 Support the appropriate growth of the Rural Countryside by offering a sustainable choice for people to live in order to maintain vibrant Rural Communities.

Objective SSO 1 To facilitate the appropriate growth of the Rural Countryside by offering a sustainable choice for people to live in order to maintain vibrant Rural Communities.

Chapter 3 – Housing

Per Map 3.1, the site is located within the remaining rural area.

Section 3.4.8 Rural Single Housing

Category 2 – Remaining Rural Areas: These areas comprise of all other rural areas outside of the identified pressure areas under strong urban influence. It is recognised that sustaining smaller community areas is important and as such, it is considered appropriate to encourage rural housing in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. In these areas, the Council recognises the importance of increasing population and supporting the rural economy, while seeking to consolidate the existing rural town and village network....

Policy RHP 1 To support and promote strong vibrant sustainable rural communities in County Mayo.

Policy RHP 2 To support the development of all rural areas to regain sustainability and vibrancy and to reverse the significant rural population decline since 1951.

Policy RHP 5 To ensure that rural housing applications employ site specific design solutions to provide for proposals that integrate into and reflect and enhance local landscape character, in terms of siting, design, materials, finishes and landscaping.

Objective RHO 4 Housing applications, within Mayo's Coastal Areas and Lakeshores and within areas along scenic routes with designated scenic views, will be considered where the applicants can demonstrate a long-standing social link to the area concerned, whilst ensuring that it:

- Does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area*
 - Cannot be considered at an alternative location*
 - Meets high standards in siting and design*
 - Satisfies all other criteria with regard to, inter alia, servicing, public safety, and environmental considerations*
 - Demonstrates enhancement to local landscape character and ecological connectivity*
- Note: An occupancy clause will be attached to any grant of planning permission.*

Objective RHO 5 *To advise all rural housing applicants to utilise the Design Guidelines for Rural Housing (Mayo County Council) and core principles of same.*

Section 3.4.12 Layout and Design

In considering proposals for development, the Council will have regard to the Guidelines on 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities – Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities' (2007); 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas' and the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide' (2009); and 'Sustainable Rural Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005), together with the Mayo Rural Housing Design Guidelines (2008). Furthermore, regard will also be had to any specific planning policy requirements (SPPRs) set out in the 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018).

Chapter 7 – Infrastructure

Objective INO 8 *To require development in unsewered areas which includes a septic tank/proprietary effluent treatment unit and percolation area to be rigorously assessed in accordance with the accepted EPA Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses or the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels, taking into account the cumulative effects of existing and proposed developments in the area.*

Chapter 10 – Natural Environment

Per Map 10.1 (Landscape Policy Areas) the site is located within Policy Area 2 where rural dwellings per Figure 10.1 are considered to have a “*medium potential to create adverse impact on the existing landscape character*”.

Policy NEP 14 *To protect, enhance and contribute to the physical, visual and scenic character of County Mayo and to preserve its unique landscape character.*

Objective NEO 26 relates to Mayo's Coastal Areas and Lakeshores and within areas along scenic routes with designated scenic views and includes similar requirements to Objective RHO 4.

Objective NEO 27 *To ensure all development proposals are consistent with the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo and the associated Landscape Sensitivity Matrix and future editions thereof.*

Objective NEO 33 *To ensure any new development within areas liable to coastal flooding are assessed and developed in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009) (as updated).*

Volume 2

Section 2.10 Effluent Treatment Systems

In un-serviced rural areas where a proposed dwelling cannot connect to the public wastewater treatment plant, a site suitability assessment will be required. The assessment must be carried out in accordance with the EPA Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses and take into account the cumulative effects of existing and proposed developments in the area. The assessment shall be carried out and certified by a suitably qualified person (i.e. the holder of an EPA FETAC certificate or equivalent) with professional indemnity insurance.

In coastal/lakeside areas, any effluent disposal system or percolation area for single dwellings shall be located at least 100m from the High-Water of the sea/lake and 100m from any lands liable to flooding along the sea / lake...

Section 2.11 Water Supply

The water requirements for proposed new single houses to a public supply should as the need may require, undertake a pre-connection enquiry with Irish Water...

Section 7.6 Access Visibility Requirements

Table 4 Access Visibility Requirements – on regional and local roads, this requires a visibility requirement of 70m in both directions where the speed limit is 50kph and 120m in both directions where the speed limit is 80kph.

Section 7.6 and Table 4 relates to access visibility requirements. I note that on local roads where the speed limit is 60kph the sightline required is 90m from a 3m setback.

Section 8.4 Effluent Treatment Systems

The suitability of a site for the treatment of wastewater shall be determined, in accordance with the criteria set down in the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals i.e. the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals-Treatment Systems for Single Houses (2009) and the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals- Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels (including any updated or superseding document or any revision or replacement of these manuals or any guidelines issued by the EPA concerning the content of these manuals).

5.2. Relevant National Policy / Ministerial Guidelines

Relevant national guidelines and policies include:

- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2005).
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (including the associated Technical Appendices) (2009).
- EPA Code of Practice for Domestic Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems (P.E. less than or equal to 10) (2021).

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

In relation to designated sites, the subject site is located:

- c.0.25km south-east of Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037).
- c.0.25km south-east of Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (site code 000470).
- c.3.4km west of Tullaghan Bay and Bog NHA (site code 001567).
- c.3.9km north-east of Doogort Machair / Lough Doo SAC and PNHA (site code 001497).
- c.4.6km north-west of Blacksod Bay / Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037).
- c.6km north-west of Corraun Point Machair / Dooreel Creek PNHA (site code 001488).
- c.6.3km north-east of Doogort East Bog NHA (site code 002381).
- c.6.3km north-east of Croaghaun/ Slievemore SAC and PNHA (site code 001955).

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The grounds of the first party appeal can be summarised as follows:

- The Planner's assessment found the design and environmental considerations to be acceptable.
- Doohoma is remote and disconnected from settlements and is under the influence of rural depopulation and the P.A. failed to consider this.
- Nine examples where permission was granted in the county are listed to show where similar relevant principles arose including, inter alia, reg. ref. 21/350 at Doohoma where permission was granted on the seaward side of the road; reg. ref 23/60075 at Roy, Doohoma where the P.A. accepted the bona fides of the applicant in relation to local links; at Geesala nearby (ABP-306796-20) where the dwelling was considered to sit comfortably in the landscape; and at Doona to the south-east (reg. ref. 25/60266) where no documentary evidence related to the availability of an alternative site was required.
- The nine examples show how the P.A. applies significant latitude at its own discretion as to how to implement Objective RHO 4 and which approach could be applied in this instance.
- The Development Plan prioritises community and socio economic considerations along with landscape considerations with population decline not considered.
- The Rural Housing Guidelines include, inter alia, requirements for well balanced and informed judgements.
- The NPF First Revision advocates a flexible approach to rural housing in areas not subject to urban development pressure and to facilitate community development.
- The document 'Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025' support the desire of the applicant to live in the Doohoma area.

- In relation to the emerging Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, the applicant should be given the opportunity to comment if necessary.

Objective RHO 4 – Social Link

- The applicant provided extensive background information in relation to her long standing significant social link to the area.
- The P.A. dismissal of the applicant's social link appears to be based on an absence of continuous occupation of the area which has no basis in policy.
- The applicant's father has long standing link to the Doohoma area, where successive generations have resided and an aunt and uncle continue to reside in Doohoma maintaining strong connections.
- The Commission's weighting of a link to the area will need to weight requirements of the national guidelines and to support the spirit of the Development Plan.
- In terms of balance, what is being achieved by imposing such a strict test in the context of the thrust of national and local policy.

Objective RHO 4 – Absence of Alternative Location

- The applicant submitted land registry details including the family home and the P.A. were aware of the totality of the land parcels within the potential sphere of influence of the applicant.
- In terms of sequential preferability, all land within the Doohoma peninsula is equal (see Figure 5 in the appeal) and any alternative land would be subject to Objective RHO 3, RHO 4 and NEO 26.

Objective RHO 4 – Other

- The proposed dwelling is modest in scale and siting and will assimilate well with the local landscape where the pattern of the area is replete with single dwellings of various styles and scales.
- The house avoids the seaward side of the road which is more exposed in terms of unobstructed views.
- The design complies with the Rural House Design Guide.

- The proposal satisfies criteria in relation to servicing, public safety and environmental considerations.
- The development will not materially alter the managed habitat of the site which is mainly in grass and in relation to biodiversity the proposed passive residential use is preferable to potentially intensive agricultural use.

Burden of Proof

- There is no requirement for documentary evidence and no definition of what this constitutes. The P.A. have not explained what difference this would make.
- The information provided by the applicant should be considered on its merits.
- There is a requirement for the P.A. to adopt a well balanced and common sense approach to decision making.

Refusal Reason Formula

- The refusal reason wording does not reflect the main planning considerations arising noting that no contravention of policy occurs, there were no concerns in relation to siting, layout or potential haphazard development and there is no objective to preserve the landscape.

Landscape

- The role of the P.A. is to manage change rather than prevent it and the landscape should be considered together with community and culture.
- The Development Plan states that the rural countryside will continue to be a living and lived-in landscape.
- The landscape appraisal of county Mayo acknowledges the evolving and changing landscape and that human activities are integral to the landscape and the policies for Doohoma recognise it as a lowland coastal zone where rural dwellings have a low development impact.

Material Contravention

- The development would be permissible even if a material contravention was cited under Section 37(2)(b) of the 2000 Act. Objective RHO 4 is

contradictory in nature and relative to other policies and does not take into account the landscape appraisal.

- The proposed development is consistent with the NPF First Revision.
- The pattern of decisions cited in the appeal also support a grant.
- The Commission also has the power to grant permission under Section 37(2)(a) if it considers a material contravention arises and the development should be considered as a whole.

Differing Objectives

- In relation to the differing policies and objectives, the absence of a material contravention in this case shows the compatibility of Objective RHO 4 with the Development Plan is a material consideration and other policies and guidance take precedence.
- Plans must be read as a whole and discretion cannot be fettered per case law.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

None.

7.0 Assessment

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

- Principle of Development
- Wastewater Treatment
- Access
- Drainage and Water Supply
- Other Matters

7.2. Principle of Development

- 7.2.1. The proposed development is for a one-off rural dwelling in a “remaining rural area” outside of the pressure areas under strong urban influence. In these areas, the importance of sustaining smaller community areas is recognised, including the importance of increasing population and supporting the rural economy. I note that Objective RHO 4 is applicable in this coastal area where applicants are required, inter alia, to demonstrate a long-standing social link to the area concerned.
- 7.2.2. The cover letter with the application notes that the applicant lived with her father for 60 months between 1999 and 2010. It also notes that alternative sites in the area were considered but that none were available and that the subject site is 1.48km from her father’s house. I note this is shown on the submitted land ownership map and I note the folio submitted for the subject site.
- 7.2.3. I note the appeal asserts that no documentary evidence is required by the Development Plan in relation to the demonstration of a long-standing social link to the area and that there is no definition of same in the CDP. Notwithstanding this, I would expect to see some documentary evidence in relation to the long-standing social link cited in the cover letter, for example, documents of attendance from a local school or letter of attendance with a local club. Therefore, I do not consider that mere assertion of a long-standing social link is sufficient where such link is required to be *demonstrated* per Objective RHO 4 of the CDP.
- 7.2.4. I note this in the context of the rural depopulation in the area shown in the appeal and in the context of CDP policies seeking to reverse this trend. However, while I consider that the thrust of rural housing policy is to provide opportunities for rural housing in the area, I note that in this coastal area that this is subject to the requirements of Objective RHO 4. In my opinion, there is therefore no basis to balance the other rural housing policies against this requirement.
- 7.2.5. I consider that Objective RHO 4 acts as a check against the wider rural housing policies for new houses in coastal areas and accordingly in my opinion it does not contradict these other policies. I also note that the Rural Housing Guidelines have been incorporated into the CDP. In relation to the applicability of the NPF First Revision, I note its policies in relation to rural housing do not substantially differ from the NPF which is incorporated into the CDP.

7.2.6. In relation to the precedents mentioned by the appellant, particularly those referred to where a flexible approach was adopted, as I have noted above, I consider there to be a requirement to demonstrate a long-standing social link to the area. I have considered the appeal and application de novo and on its merits relative to currently applicable policy. In my opinion, the precedents cited in the appeal are not persuasive from a planning perspective and do not bind the decision maker in this case.

7.2.7. I consider Objective RHO 4 to be reasonable in that, consistent with national policy, it seeks to limit housing development in rural areas from a sustainability and landscape perspective and as part of a rural housing policy which favours locating such housing in existing serviced settlements. In my opinion, given the failure to demonstrate a long-standing social need for the house, the proposed development would contribute to the encroachment of random rural development in the area, would militate against the conservation of the rural environment and the efficient provision of public services and infrastructure.

7.2.8. I note that in addition to the requirement to demonstrate a long-standing social link that applicants in areas subject to Objective RHO 4 are also required to demonstrate that the proposal:

- *Does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area*
- *Cannot be considered at an alternative location.*
- *Meets high standards in siting and design*
- *Satisfies all other criteria with regard to, inter alia, servicing, public safety, and environmental considerations*
- *Demonstrates enhancement to local landscape character and ecological connectivity*

Note: An occupancy clause will be attached to any grant of planning permission.

7.2.9. I note that the appeal notes that the P.A. assessment had no significant issues in relation to these additional criteria. In relation to the consideration of an alternative location, I largely agree with the appeal that there is effectively no realistic alternative location available on the peninsula that would be preferable to the subject site.

- 7.2.10. In relation to siting and design, I note that the proposed dwelling would be well set back from the roadside and would be located away from the seaward side of the public road. Noting this, and the modest scale of the house design and the mature hedgerow along the field boundaries, I consider that it would be appropriately sited in the coastal rural context to minimize its visual impact.
- 7.2.11. I note the building design with pitched roof, simple form and vertical emphasis windows and the ridge height of 5.712m and eaves height of 2.62m and front and rear gable projection elements. I consider that this accords with the Mayo Rural Housing Design Guidelines 2008 and would meet a high standard in siting and design. Noting this and the proposed landscaping scheme, subject to a condition to retain the side hedgerows and the planting of a new rear native species hedgerow, I consider that the proposed house would integrate with the site and the rural coastal landscape in the vicinity.
- 7.2.12. In this context, in my opinion it would also reasonably enhance the local landscape character and ecological connectivity. Overall, I consider that the design and siting of the dwelling would minimise its visual impact such that it would not impinge significantly on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area. I also note that there would be no significant negative impacts on residential amenities in the vicinity with no existing residences located adjacent to the site. In relation to the criteria in relation to servicing, public safety and environmental considerations, these are considered elsewhere in this report with no significant issues noted.
- 7.2.13. However, given what I consider to be a failure to demonstrate a long-standing social link to the area, I note that the requirements of Objective RHO 4 of the CDP have not been met in this case. Therefore, I consider that the proposed development would be contrary to this objective and that permission should be refused accordingly.

7.3. Wastewater Treatment

- 7.3.1. In relation to the proposed on-site wastewater treatment system and percolation area, I note that per CDP policy the applicant is required to demonstrate that it would, if granted permission, accord with the EPA Code of Practice. I note the submitted 'Proposed Site Treatment System' report prepared by RM Consulting Engineers Ltd.

- 7.3.2. I note the submitted Site Characterisation Form which notes an aquifer category of poor and moderate vulnerability. I note the depth of the trial hole is noted to be 2.2m and that the soil for the first half metre is noted to be peaty and then gravelly sandy silt below. I note the test results for the three trial holes which found a subsurface percolation value of 59 and a surface percolation value of 65. The groundwater protection response is noted to be R1. Based on this the report recommended a tertiary treatment system and infiltration area. I note this is consistent with Table 6.4 of the EPA Code of Practice.
- 7.3.3. I note that per Table 6.3 of the EPA Code of Practice that the minimum depth of unsaturated soil/subsoil required is 0.9m which would be achieved in this case. I note that the minimum required separation distances of Table 6.2 of the EPA Code of Practice would be met. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed development would accord with the EPA Code of Practice and with CDP policy in relation to same including Objective INO 8 of Volume 1 and Sections 2.10 (Effluent Treatment Systems) and 8.4 (Effluent Treatment Systems) of Volume 2 of the CDP.

7.4. Access

- 7.4.1. I note the proposed new site access from the L52874 local road where the speed limit is 50kph and the road is one lane wide. I note that the Site Layout Plan drawing labelled shows that sightlines in excess of 70m would be provided consistent with Table 4 (Access Visibility Requirements) of the CDP. My site visit confirmed that the site access can be provided as shown on the submitted drawings. I am therefore satisfied that no significant road safety issues would arise as a result of the proposed development.

7.5. Drainage and Water Supply

- 7.5.1. In relation to surface water drainage for the proposed development, I note the soakaway proposed to the rear of the dwelling and the modest footprint of the dwelling relative to the site size. Should permission be granted, I recommend a standard SUDS condition to ensure surface water drainage is catered for on site in accordance with best practice SUDS methods.
- 7.5.2. In relation to the water supply, I note the letter from the Doohoma Head Group Water Scheme which notes that the applicant is eligible to join it. Should permission be granted, I recommend a standard condition in relation to same.

7.6. Other Matters

- 7.6.1. I note the appeal raised the issue of potential material contravention which was not cited by the P.A. and I do not consider that a material contravention of the CDP would arise in this case, particularly noting that it may be possible for the applicant to demonstrate compliance with Objective RHO 4 of the CDP.
- 7.6.2. I have noted above how I consider that rural housing policy provides for rural housing in this area but that this is subject to Objective RHO 4. In this context, I note that I have considered the CDP as a whole and have not fettered my discretion in this case.

8.0 EIA Screening

- 8.1. The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. 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 (see Appendix 3), 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 Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037) and Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (site code 000470) in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 9.2. This determination is based on:
- The modest nature of the proposed works.

- The location and distance from the nearest European site and lack of connections.

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 (see Appendix 4), together with relevant guidance published by the Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland), including applicable codes of practice for the protection of water quality.
- 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. The proposed development has been designed in accordance with EPA codes of practice and best practice guidance, ensuring that appropriate measures can be incorporated to prevent pollution, control runoff, and protect both surface water and groundwater receptors.
- 10.4. Furthermore, the development will not adversely affect the achievement of established environmental objectives, including the maintenance or attainment of Good Ecological Status/Potential and Good Chemical Status, as required under the Directive. 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 in this case.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the location of the subject site within an area designated as a remaining rural area and within a coastal area, to the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 and to Objective RHO 4 of Volume 1 of the

Development Plan where applicants are required to demonstrate a long-standing social link to the area and having regard to the submissions made, it is considered that the applicant does not come within the scope of the housing need criteria for a house at this location. In the absence of an identified long-standing local connection to the area and need for a house, the proposed development would contribute to the encroachment of random rural development in the area, would militate against the conservation of the rural environment and the efficient provision of public services and infrastructure. The proposed development would contravene Objective RHO 4 of Volume 1 of the Development Plan and would 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.

Ciarán Daly
Planning Inspector

16th September 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-501628-MO-26
Proposed Development Summary	The proposed development, in summary, consists of the following: • Single storey dwelling of 178.1sqm with pitched roof and front and rear projecting gable elements at the eastern side. • New vehicular access and sewage treatment system.
Development Address	Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.
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 Part 2, Class 10(b)(i). Threshold: Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.

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)

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Form 2

EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	PL-501628-MO-26
Proposed Development Summary	The proposed development, in summary, consists of the following: • Single storey dwelling of 178.1sqm with pitched roof and front and rear projecting gable elements at the eastern side. • New vehicular access and sewage treatment system.
Development Address	Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	Briefly comment on the key characteristics of the development, having regard to the criteria listed. One dwelling (178.1sqm). The development has a modest footprint, comes forward as a standalone project, does not require demolition works, does not require the use of substantial natural resources, or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance. The development, by virtue of its type, does not pose a risk of major accident and/or disaster, or is vulnerable to climate change.

Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	Briefly comment on the location of the development, having regard to the criteria listed The development is situated in a rural area on agricultural land which is abundant in the area. The development is c.0.25km south-east of Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037) and is c.0.25km south-east of Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (site code 000470). It is removed from centres of population.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	Having regard to the characteristics of the development and the sensitivity of its location, consider the potential for SIGNIFICANT effects, not just effects. Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on the environmental factors listed in section 171A of the Act.

Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

DP/ADP: _____ Date: _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)

Appendix 3: AA Screening Determination

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Case Reference Number: PL-501628-MO-26	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics Single storey dwellinghouse with new vehicular access and sewage treatment system with percolation area.	
Brief description of project	The proposed development, in summary, consists of the following: • Single storey dwelling of 178.1sqm with pitched roof and front and rear projecting gable elements at the eastern side. • New vehicular access and sewage treatment system.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The subject site, of area 0.8ha, consists of a grass field bordered by hedgerow with road frontage on to a local road. There were some rushes growing on the site on the date of my visit.
Screening report	Y – Appropriate Assessment report prepared by O’ Grady Consulting Engineers Ltd.
Natura Impact Statement	N

Relevant submissions	N/A			
Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model				
European Site (code)	Qualifying interests ¹ Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections ²	Consider further in screening ³ Y/N
Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037).	Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001] Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003] Slavonian Grebe (Podiceps auritus) [A007] Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]	c.0.25km to the north-west	No, nearest surface water body is 90m to the north-east of the rear site corner.	N

	Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>) [A466] Sandwich Tern (<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>) [A863] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by	c.0.25km to the north-west	No, nearest surface water body is 90m to	N

(site code 000470).	seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> -		the north-east of the rear site corner.	
----------------------------	--	--	--	--

	type vegetation [3150] Alkaline fens [7230] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]			
¹ Summary description / cross reference to NPWS website is acceptable at this stage in the report ² Based on source-pathway-receptor: Direct/ indirect/ tentative/ none, via surface water/ ground water/ air/ use of habitats by mobile species ³ if no connections: N				
Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone <u>or</u> in combination) on European Sites AA Screening matrix				
Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*			
	Impacts	Effects		
Site 1: Name (code) QI list				
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y/N			

	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
	Impacts	Effects
Site 2: Name (code) QI list		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y/N	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
*Where a restore objective applies it is necessary to consider whether the project might compromise the objective of restoration or make restoration more difficult.		
Further Commentary / discussion (only where necessary)		
Step 4: Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site		
I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037) and Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (site code 000470). The proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on any European site(s). No further assessment is required for the project. No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.		

Screening Determination

Finding of no likely significant effects

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 Blacksod Bay/ Broad Haven SPA (site code 004037) and Mullet / Blacksod Bay Complex SAC (site code 000470) 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 modest nature of the proposed works.
- The location and distance from the nearest European site and lack of connections.

Appendix 4
Water Framework Directive

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCOPING TABLE			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Coimisiún Pleanála ref. no.	PL-501628-MO-26	Townland, address	Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.
Description of project		Single storey dwellinghouse with new vehicular access and sewage treatment system with percolation area at Doohoma, Ballina, County Mayo.	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		Rural site with no surface water pathways. Open drain along boundary with roadside.	
Proposed surface water details		Soakpit to rear of dwelling.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		Group Water Scheme, connection available.	
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues		On site wastewater treatment system and percolation area.	
Others?			

Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection							
Identified water body	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater) (Consider all phases)	Mitigation Measures proposed	Is mitigation sufficient? Will there be any residual impacts?
Ground	Belmullet (IE_WE_G_0057)	Good	Not at risk	Anthropogenic.	Drainage to ground.	Development incorporates wastewater treatment system and SUDS can be conditioned.	Mitigation sufficient, no residual impacts.
River	Tulachán Dubh_010 (IE_WE_33T130850)	Moderate	Review	Anthropogenic.	None.	N/A	
Coastal	Blacksod Bay (IE_WE_360_0000)	High	Not at risk	None.	None.	N/A	