



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-501681-WD-26

Development	Construction of 5 no. glamping pods, wastewater treatment system, and associated site works
Location	Coolbunnia, Cheekpoint, Waterford
Planning Authority	Waterford City and County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	26/60272
Applicants	Colin and Gerard Fennelly
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party Appeal
Appellants	Colin and Gerard Fennelly
Observers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Noel & Elaine Ryan2. Helen Keane3. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Date of Site Inspection	1 st September 2026
Inspector	Gary Farrelly

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site has a stated area of 0.67 hectares and is located within the rural townland of Coolbunna, County Waterford, which is approximately 1km south of the village of Cheekpoint and approximately 5km east of Waterford City. The site is located approximately 100 metres west of the shoreline of the River Suir which forms part of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002162). The topography of the site ranges from 69.005 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 51.361 metres AOD and slopes down towards the shoreline of the River Suir. The intervening lands between the subject site and the shoreline comprise of forestry.
- 1.2. Faithlegg National School is located approximately 150 metres northwest of the site. Access to the site is via a private access laneway which is accessed off a private cul-de-sac road approximately 80 metres west of the subject site. This private cul-de-sac road is accessed off the public road L-4082 which is approximately 340 metres north of the junction of the private access laneway and private cul-de-sac road.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Permission is sought to construct a glamping development of 5 no. glamping pods, proprietary wastewater treatment plant and associated works. Each pod is proposed to have a floor area of 23sqm and a maximum height of 2.98 metres. The pods will be externally finished in timber cladding, black tile effect cladding to the curved roof and walls and black windows and door. The internal layout will comprise of an open plan eating/sleeping area (incorporating 1 no. double bed) and shower room.
- 2.2. The redline application boundary associated with the subject site encompasses the area of the proposed glamping pods and wastewater treatment plant, however, it does not extend the full length of the private access laneway or to the junction of the private cul-de-sac road and public road L-4082. However, the proposed development includes realignment works at the junction of the private and public roads to facilitate required sightlines. Such works include the set back of approximately 81.5 metres of embankments including a third party's boundary wall.

- 2.3. Letters of consent from the landowner of the subject site, as well as the landowners at the junction where the road improvement works are proposed have been provided as part of the application. The application was also accompanied by a number of documents including a planning report (with photomontages), Traffic Report, Site Suitability Test Report and a report entitled 'Introduction to Business and Business Plan'.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

The planning authority (PA) decided to refuse permission by Order dated 17th June 2026 for the following two reasons:

- 1. The site location is removed from a designated settlement as per the settlement hierarchy contained in the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028. Tourism Policy Objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25 of the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028 relate to proposals for tourist accommodation including glamping and camping sites and seek to direct such accommodation to designated settlements and stipulates that a development shall comply with one of a number of stated criteria. Having regard to the site location it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that the proposed development would be contrary to Policy Objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25 of the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028, would set an undesirable precedent for similar type developments and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.*
- 2. Having regard to the location of the proposed development on an elevated site overlooking the River Suir in an area designated 'high sensitive' in the Scenic Classification in the Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment of the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028 it is considered that the proposed development would detract from the visual amenity of the area and would be contrary to Landscape Policy Objective L 02 of the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022 2028 which seeks to "protect the landscape and natural assets of the County by ensuring that proposed developments do*

not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area and ensuring that such proposals are not unduly visually obtrusive in the landscape, in particular, in or adjacent to the uplands, along river corridors, coastal or other distinctive landscape character units.” The development would, therefore, be contrary to the policies and objectives of the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028, would set an undesirable precedent for similar type developments and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

Planning Report

The planning report on file from the executive planner (EP) assessed the application in terms of its principle with tourism policy objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25, landscape and visual impact, traffic safety and wastewater treatment. The EP considered that the site was removed from a designated settlement, did not support an existing rural tourism initiative and did not relate to the reuse of existing building stock. The EP acknowledged that the site was located east of an identified recreational walk but noted that ECON 25 states that camping sites serving a high potential tourism attractor should be located at existing settlements or established centres. In terms of landscape and visual impact, the EP noted the planning history of previous refusals (PA refs. 21/1210 and 10/93) in the area, however, noted that the backdrop provided by rising lands to the west and an existing wooded area to the east which would provide an element of screening from the estuary. However, refusal was still recommended on landscape and visual grounds.

In terms of traffic, the EP noted that one of the letters of consent at the roadside boundary related to the trimming back of the boundary with no mention of the set back of the boundary. The EP considered that due to the scale of the proposed development, the proposal would not give rise to a significant increase in traffic on the wider road network notwithstanding the submitted traffic counts not accounting for school drop off and pick up times. The EP also noted that the swept path analysis did not extend the full length of the lane and appeared to be at a location outside the site boundary. In terms of wastewater, the EP noted that the site characterisation form

referenced a 5-bedroom dwelling and 7 population equivalent (PE) and not a development of 5 no. glamping pods with minimum double occupancy capacity. The EP considered that further details and clarification was required. The EP considered a development at Ardmore (PA ref. 25/60318) that was granted by the Commission after a first party appeal, and noted that it was located in close proximity to the designated settlement. An Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening was carried out and considered that due to the nature of the proposed development and intervening distance to the SAC, no AA issues would arise.

Whilst the EP considered that further points of clarification were required in terms of consent for roadside boundary adjustments, consent for the use of the private laneway, wastewater treatment plant sizing and swept path analysis, the EP recommended refusal of permission for the two reasons outlined in Section 3.1 above. This was endorsed by the Senior Executive Planner.

Other Technical Reports

- Environment Section (*report dated 15th June 2026*) – This section outlined no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

None on file.

3.4. Third Party Observations

There were a number of third-party observations submitted to the PA objecting to the proposed development on grounds relating to wastewater treatment, contravention of tourism policy objectives within the Development Plan, traffic safety concerns, AA concerns and visual amenity concerns.

4.0 Relevant Planning History

Subject site

- PA ref. 24/60367

On 23rd August 2024, Colin Fennelly and Ger Fennelly were refused permission for a glamping site of 5 no. pods for 3 no. reasons relating to the location of the accommodation outside of any settlement contrary to policy objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25, the additional traffic movements on a narrow private cul-de-sac road where sightlines at the junction with the L-4082 public road were not demonstrated, and the location of the development on an elevated site overlooking the River Suir within a 'high sensitive' landscape classification contrary to landscape policy objective L 02. The applicants did not appeal this decision.

Site approximately 100 metres south of subject site

- PA ref. 21/1210

On 22nd February 2022, the PA refused outline permission for a dwelling for 4 no. reasons including the elevated nature of the site in a visually vulnerable landscape, overconcentration and ribbon development, and on the grounds of a traffic hazard due to inadequate sightlines at the junction of the private cul-de-sac and L-4082 public road.

Adjoining site to the north of subject site

- PA ref. 10/93 / ACP ref. PL 24.236848

On 30th September 2010, the Commission refused permission for a bungalow dwellinghouse on visual amenity grounds due to the exposed position of the site relative to the estuary of the River Suir in an area of high scenic amenity. This decision upheld the PA's reason for refusal.

Site approximately 240 metres northwest of subject site

- PA ref. 26/60490

On 2nd July 2026, an application was lodged to the PA for the construction of a new dwelling with access to be taken off the private cul-de-sac road. Further information was requested by the PA on 25th August 2026 which has not been responded to date according to the PA's website (7th October 2026). The further information request included the revision of the site boundary to reserve additional lands for future expansion of the neighbouring school and revised sightlines from the entrance onto the cul-de-sac road.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028

This Plan was adopted by Elected Members on 7th June 2022 and came into effect on 19th July 2022. There has been 1 no. Variation to date, which was made on 13th November 2025. This variation included new strategies and policy objectives. There is currently a second proposed draft variation and the public consultation closed on 5th October 2026.

Rural and Marine Policy Objectives

ECON 13 Rural Resources - To facilitate farm or rural resource related enterprises and diversification, including food production and processing on farm/agricultural holdings, mineral and aggregate extractive industry, aquaculture and marine, the circular economy, and proposals which support rural tourism initiatives which are developed upon rural enterprise, social enterprise, natural/ cultural heritage assets and outdoor recreational activities, subject to the capacity of the site and the location to facilitate the proposal.

Subject to environmental policies and the development management standards of this Development Plan, the nature and scale of any proposed development will be assessed having regard to a number of factors, including nature and scale of the existing operation, building, or tourist attractions, source of material (where appropriate), traffic movements, water and wastewater requirements, capacity to reuse existing and redundant buildings, and likely impacts on amenity and the environment and the Natura 2000 Network.

Tourism Policy Objectives

ECON 24 Tourism Accommodation – We will continue to support the development of a variety of accommodation types at appropriate locations throughout Waterford City and County (hotels, B&Bs, Guest Houses, self catering, caravan and camping, glamping etc) which can improve the economic potential of increased visitor revenue, increase dwell time and meet visitor needs. Tourism accommodation should generally be located within towns and villages (unless otherwise justified to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority) and developed with the principles of universal design to ensure they are accessible for all.

ECON 25 Camping/Caravan Sites - We will ensure that all camping sites are of a standard which do not adversely impact on environmental and landscape quality and amenity, avoid adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites and build and uphold the reputation of Waterford as a high quality destination for guests from home and abroad. Proposals for camping sites should be consistent with the development management standards of Volume 2 and comply with one of the following:

- Settlements: Camping sites should be located at appropriate locations within or adjacent to existing settlements where such proposals demonstrate the provision of safe pedestrian links to the settlement.
- High Potential Tourism Attractors: Camping sites to service a high potential tourism attractor such as the Waterford Greenway, coastline, rivers, Comeragh Mountains, walking and tourism trails, outdoor recreational amenities or Blueways, should be located at existing settlements or at established centres which provide existing services to tourists, subject to the capacity of the site and the location to facilitate the proposal.
- All Other Locations: We may facilitate proposals for camping sites which support rural tourism initiatives developed upon rural enterprise, natural heritage assets and outdoor recreational activities and which are located at a rural location removed from any settlement or high potential tourism attractor, subject to the capacity of the site and the location to facilitate the proposal. The scale of any tourism accommodation will be determined by the nature and scale of the existing tourist attractions and/or the extent of existing underutilised agricultural/commercial/ancillary building stock available for reuse for the purposes of tourist accommodation and ancillary services.
- Campervans: Proposals for the provision of standalone campervan facilities i.e. designated parking bays/electrical supply, within car parks will be considered in terms of the availability of surplus car parking and the capacity of the site and the location to facilitate the proposal.

Landscape Policy Objectives

L 02 Protecting our Landscape and Seascape - We will protect the landscape and natural assets of the County by ensuring that proposed developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their

area and ensuring that such proposals are not unduly visually obtrusive in the landscape, in particular, in or adjacent to the uplands, along river corridors, coastal or other distinctive landscape character units.

L 03 Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment - We will assess all proposals for development outside of our settlements in terms of the 2020 Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (Appendix 8) and the associated sensitivity of the particular location. There will be a presumption against developments which are located on elevated and exposed sites and where the landscape cannot accommodate such development with reasonable and appropriate mitigation.

Coast and Marine Policy Objectives

C&M 05 Scenic Coastal Areas - To protect the scenic value of Waterford's Coastal Zone including landward and seaward views and continuous views along the coastline and manage development so it will not materially detract from the visual amenity of the coast.

Natura 2000 Network Policy Objectives

BD 04 Appropriate Assessment - All projects and plans arising from this Plan will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and subsequent Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:

1. The plan or project will not give rise to significant direct, indirect or secondary effects on the conservation objectives of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects);

BD 05 Protection of European Sites - Projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall not be permitted except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Hedgerow Policy Objectives

BD 20 - To protect hedgerows in all new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, such features should be incorporated into the open space provisions at the concept design stage. There will be a presumption against the removal of hedgerows however where their removal is unavoidable replacement planting shall involve establishment of new hedgerows with native species of local provenance and that support pollinating species.

Trees and Woodlands Policy Objectives

BD 21 - We will preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the County and City by preserving as far as possible trees, woodlands and hedgerows.

Volume 2 – Development Management Standards

Section 8.6 Sightline Requirements

Waterford City & County Council will require that all new developments proposing a new entrance or a significantly intensified existing access point onto the public road network shall comply with the relevant TII Publications/DMURS Guidelines.

Section 8.7 Sightline Provisions

Should it be necessary to modify roadside boundaries outside of the designated site area, a letter of agreement in this regard will be required from the relevant landowner.

5.2. National Policy

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (revised 2025) and National Development Plan 2021-2030

National Policy Objective 34 - Continue to facilitate tourism development and in particular the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, and a Blueways and Peatways Strategy which prioritises a coordinated approach to the sustainable management of outdoor recreation sites; and projects on the basis of their environmental sustainability, achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level while ensuring their development is compliant with the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the national climate change objective and requirements for environmental assessments.

- Water Action Plan 2024, A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland

The Plan responds to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, to accelerate the identification and implementation of the right measures in the right places to both restore and protect all water bodies. The catchments.ie website provides substantial background information for this plan and the most current and up-to-date information on the status of local rivers, lakes and water bodies.

- Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023-2030

The NBAP includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing existing challenges and new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss. Section 59B(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Board, as a public body, to have regard to the objectives and targets of the NBAP in the performance of its functions, to the extent that they may affect or relate to the functions of the Board. The impact of development on biodiversity, including species and habitats, can be assessed at a European, National and Local level and is taken into account in our decision-making having regard to the Habitats and Birds Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and other relevant legislation, strategy and policy where applicable.

- Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2025 / CAP 2024

Climate Action Plan 2025 builds upon the 2024 Plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and it should be read in conjunction with Climate Action Plan 2024.

5.3. Regional Policy

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 53 – Tourism

It is an objective to:

- Enhance provision of tourism and leisure amenity to cater for increased population in the Region including recreation, entertainment, cultural, catering, accommodation, transport and water infrastructure inter alia;

5.4. National Guidance

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009)

5.5. Natural Heritage Designations

The subject site is located outside of a designated site, however, is located approximately 100 metres west of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002162). Furthermore, the site is located approximately 580 metres west of the Barrow River Estuary proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) (Site Code 000698).

6.0 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (I refer the Commission to Appendices 1(a) and 1(b) 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.

7.0 The Appeal

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

A first party appeal to the Commission was lodged by the applicants on 7th July 2026 which respectfully requests the Commission to overturn the decision of the PA and grant permission for the proposed development. The grounds for appeal are summarised as follows:

- The decision to refuse did not take into account the precedent set by the Commission in granting permission for a similar development at Dysert, County Waterford (PA ref. 25/60318 /ACP ref. 323240). This overturned the decision of the PA to refuse permission and permission was subsequently granted for 5

no. glamping pods. Two of the three original refusal reasons by the PA were almost identical to the refusal reasons in this case. It is considered that this inconsistency creates uncertainty for applicants and undermines public confidence.

- With regards to refusal reason number 1, the Commission has found that camping sites to service high potential tourism attractors are not solely limited to exiting settlements or established centres. They can also be permitted outside of these centres and settlements under the 'All Other Locations' section of policy objective ECON 25. There is no explanation or justification within the planner's report as to why the precedent established by the Commission was ignored.
- Whilst the planner's report notes that 25/60318 was south of the settlement of Ardmore, it noted that it was in close proximity to the village, however, the site of the proposed development is located just 730 metres from Cheekpoint which is only 380 metres more than the distance of 25/60318 to Ardmore.
- With regards to refusal reason number 2, the development at Dysert was located within a 'Most Sensitive' scenic classification in the Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment of the Development Plan. This is a significantly higher classification than the 'high sensitive' classification of the subject site and surrounding area.
- As part of 25/60318, the Commission noted the high architectural design standards of the proposed glamping pods, including the materials and colour palette, the sensitive placement of the pods nestled within the landform and at an appropriate distance to the coastal edge. The design and siting in this case is similar to this development. The submitted photomontages illustrate that the proposed development would have minimal visual impact.
- The proposed development is located a short distance from Cheekpoint, however, it will broaden visitor accommodation options within the wider area, will contribute positively to the tourism policy objectives of the Development Plan (ECON 24 and ECON 25) and the development will not give rise to residential, traffic or environmental impacts.

- The site was selected due to its location on the edge of Cheekpoint and its location on the Passage East – Hurt Hill looped walk, which provides direct connections onwards onto a number of other walking and cycling routes. The site is connected via an existing footpath all along Cheekpoint Road to the settlement of Cheekpoint and therefore providing pedestrian access to the site.

7.2. Planning Authority Response

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

7.3. Observations

There was a total of 3 no. observations received on the appeal from Noel and Elaine Ryan (*lodged on 22nd July 2026*), Helen Keane (*lodged on 29th July 2026*) and the prescribed body, the Development Applications Unit (DAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (*lodged on 7th September 2026*). The observations are summarised as follows:

- It is requested that the Commission refuses permission for the proposed development.
- There are serious concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development on traffic safety on the cul-de-sac laneway. Whilst the application references a number of pull in points these are located on private property and no permission has been sought to utilise such points. There are concerns regarding increased congestion and illegal parking on the road associated with the greenway.
- The access road from the public road is a historical pedestrian pathway and is substandard. The submitted traffic impact assessment did not carry out traffic surveys at appropriate times (i.e. when the local school was in session) and therefore there is no accurate baseline. The site is not suitable because access and junction safety is substandard and traffic impact has not been adequately assessed.
- The PA also considered that the proposed development would detract from the visual amenity of the area, and therefore, the issues linked to this site cannot

be compared to the Ardmore development. The PA has considered the application on its own merits.

- There are a number of differences between the subject site and 25/60318. Visitors to Ardmore would have passed through the village and would have been aware of available services and attractions and thus economic benefits to the village would have been brought in accordance with ECON 24 of the Development Plan. Visitors to this glamping site would not pass through the village of Cheekpoint, and in any case, it has much less to offer than Ardmore with one local shop and pub.
- The distance of the site to the harbour in Cheekpoint, which is suggested as the main attraction of the village, is closer to 2km and greater than that suggested by the applicants.
- There are concerns regarding the impact of the proposed wastewater treatment system on the adjacent SAC. An appropriate assessment screening report should have been carried out.
- There are fire safety concerns due to the inability of fire trucks to access the site and the high forest density along the estuary and close proximity to houses.

Prescribed Body

The submission from the DAU of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is summarised as follows:

- It has considered the proposed development from a nature conservation perspective, with particular regards to the location of the proposed development and associated wastewater treatment infrastructure on the shores of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
- The proposed development has the potential to give rise to both construction and operational impacts on the SAC. Of particular concern is the proposed wastewater treatment facility. Given the location of the development adjacent to the SAC river system, there is a clear potential pathway for impacts arising from wastewater, surface run-off, sediment mobilisation, nutrient enrichment or accidental pollution. Any deterioration in water quality could adversely affect the aquatic qualifying interests of the SAC.

- Potential impacts associated with construction activity, lighting, vegetation removal and increased human activity should be considered, particularly in relation to otter and the existing riparian corridor.
- It is considered that the potential for significant effects on the European site cannot be excluded at this stage and it is the opinion of the Department that the proposal should be subject to a full screening for Appropriate Assessment. It is recommended that a full appropriate assessment screening report is completed by a suitably qualified ecologist before reaching a conclusion regarding the potential effects of the proposed development. Should significant effects not being excluded, the proposal should proceed to full AA.

8.0 **Assessment**

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

- Principle of Development
- Landscape and Visual Amenity
- Traffic Safety

8.2. The Commission should note that the applicants were previously refused permission for the proposed development within the subject site as part of application PA ref. 24/60367. The applicants did not appeal this decision to the Commission. On the basis of the applicants' grounds of appeal, it appears that this subsequent application and appeal have been lodged in response to the decision of the Commission in ACP-323240-25. This decision related to a glamping development at Dysert, Ardmore, located outside the settlement of Ardmore and which I note is approximately 60km southwest of the subject site. The Commission should note that each case is determined on its own merits and its decision in ACP-323240-25 does not equate to a requirement in this case to arrive at a similar decision.

Principle of Development

- 8.3. The Commission should note that the PA's first reason for refusal related to concerns regarding the siting of the proposed tourist accommodation removed from any designated settlement. It considered the siting contrary to policy objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25 of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 (herein referred to as "the CDP").
- 8.4. Firstly, I note that policy objective ECON 24 of the CDP supports the development of accommodation at appropriate locations and states that this should generally be located within towns and villages, unless otherwise justified to the satisfaction of the PA. Secondly, I note that policy objective ECON 25 of the CDP outlines that camping sites should comply with one of four categories/criteria subject to the overall development not adversely impacting environmental and landscape quality and amenity, and Natura 2000 sites. I consider two of the four categories to be relevant in this case. These are 'High Potential Tourism Attractors' and 'All Other Locations'.
- 8.5. With regards to 'High Potential Tourism Attractors' this states that camping sites to service high potential tourism attractors, such as walking and tourism trails, should be located at existing settlements or established centres which provide existing services to tourists. I note that the subject site is located within a rural area approximately 1.3km (travel distance) from the rural village of Cheekpoint and approximately 1.3km from the rural node of Faithlegg. The nearest convenience shop to the site is 'Cheekpoint Stores' approximately 1.5km travel distance. The nearest restaurant/public house to the site is 'The Suir Inn' approximately 1.9km from the site. I consider that the siting of the proposed development does not comply with 'High Potential Tourism Attractors' due to its location and distance from the nearest settlement.
- 8.6. With regards to 'All Other Locations' this states that proposals outside of settlements or high potential tourism attractors may be facilitated if they support rural tourism initiatives developed upon rural enterprise, natural heritage assets and outdoor recreational activities, subject to the capacity of the site and location. I will now assess whether the proposals could be facilitated in accordance with this category.
- 8.7. The Commission should note that the application was accompanied by a report entitled 'introduction to business and business plan' which outlines that the business model is to create a private retreat for couples to get away from the hustle and bustle

of busy cities. The report also outlines that the development would support walking trails and local shops and services. The applicants' planning report expands on this and states that the site was selected on the basis of its secluded nature, its proximity by walking or cycling to Cheekpoint and Faithlegg and its direct connection with nature from views over the adjoining woodland to the River Suir.

- 8.8. The Commission should note that the applicants' justification case is primarily on the location of the site in close proximity to a designated recreational walking route approximately 80 metres west of the site. I note that this designated route encompasses the private cul-de-sac road and also passes through the village of Cheekpoint and rural node of Faithlegg. I would also highlight to the Commission that whilst the subject site is located approximately 100 metres from the shoreline of the River Suir, there is no connectivity to the shore provided as part of the proposals (and thus no access to any water based recreational activities). In contrast, I note that the shoreline of the River Suir is accessible within the settlement of Cheekpoint.
- 8.9. It is my view that the justification for the subject location put forward by the applicants is not sufficient in accordance with policy objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25. Whilst the site is located in proximity to a designated recreational walk route, this route also passes through the settlement of Cheekpoint, as well as the rural node of Faithlegg, and thus, the siting of the proposed development within the village would also benefit this recreational amenity. Furthermore, having inspected the site I observed a footpath on the opposite side of the junction of the private cul-de-sac road and L-4082 which provided pedestrian connectivity to the village and rural node of Faithlegg. However, I note that the travel distance from the site to the settlement of Cheekpoint (where the applicants' business plan outlines where a number of the shops and services are located) is approximately 1.3km. It is my view that this is a significant separation distance for walking. Notwithstanding that each case is determined on its own merits the Commission should note that the separation distance of ACP-323240-25 and the settlement boundary of Ardmore was c.350 metres.
- 8.10. Overall, I am not satisfied that adequate justification has been demonstrated by the applicants to site the proposed development at the subject location removed from the settlement of Cheekpoint and rural node of Faithlegg. Accordingly, it is my view that the proposed development at the subject location would contravene policy objectives ECON 24 (Tourism Accommodation) and ECON 25 (Camping/Caravan Sites) of the

CDP. Therefore, it is my recommendation to the Commission that the PA's first reason for refusal is upheld.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

- 8.11. The Commission should note that the PA's second reason for refusal related to concerns regarding the location of the proposed development on an elevated site overlooking the River Suir in a designated 'High Sensitive' landscape area. It is considered that it would be contrary to policy objective L 02 (Protecting our Landscape and Seascape) of the CDP. I also note that the PA's planning report referenced two previous refusals for dwellinghouses within the vicinity of the subject site (refs. 21/1210 and 10/93). I note that the applicants highlight that ACP-323240-25 was approved by the Commission despite its location within a designated 'Most Sensitive' landscape at Dysert.
- 8.12. The Commission should note that policy objective L 02 seeks to protect the landscape from developments that would detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of the area. Furthermore, I note that policy objective L 03 (Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment) seeks to assess proposals in accordance with the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of Appendix 8 of the CDP, and policy objective C&M 05 (Scenic Coastal Areas) seeks to protect the scenic value of the coastal zone including landward and seaward views and continuous views along the coastline. Having reviewed the LCA within Appendix 8 of the CDP, I note that the site is located within both the 'Coastal' landscape character type (Map A8.1) and the East Waterford Lowlands (Map A8.2). Therefore, this appears to be inconsistent with the landscape character units set out in Table A8.1. However, having reviewed the interactive map associated with the LCA, I note that the site is located within a 'High Sensitive' designation which Table A8.2 describes as having a "distinctive character with some capacity to absorb a limited range of appropriate new developments while sustaining its existing character".
- 8.13. Notwithstanding the previous refusals for dwellinghouses within the vicinity of the subject site (including PA ref. 10/93 / ACP ref. PL 24.236848 refused to the north of the site), I consider the proposed development to be modest in comparison to the applications previously refused. The glamping pods are of modest scale measuring 23sqm with a maximum height of 2.98 metres. The architectural design is of a high

standard with external finishes complementing the woodland nature of the lands to the east which I consider would also assist in screening the development when viewed from the River Suir and further east (as shown within the submitted photomontages and section drawings). Furthermore, the pods have been sited at a finished floor level (FFL) ranging from 63.45 and 65mAOD with lands to the west rising further from the shoreline.

- 8.14. Therefore, notwithstanding the elevated nature of the site, it is my view that the siting of the proposed development would not be unduly visually obtrusive to the 'High Sensitive' landscape area due to the modest scale of the proposed glamping pods, the high quality architectural design, the surrounding topography of the area, and the existing woodland to the east which I consider would assist in screening the proposed development. Overall, it is my view that the proposed development would not seriously injure the visual amenity of the area and, therefore, would not contravene objectives L 02, L 03 or C&M 05 (Scenic Coastal Areas) of the CDP.

Traffic Safety (New Issue)

- 8.15. The Commission should note that the PA did not refuse permission on traffic safety grounds, and it considered that the proposal would not give rise to a significant increase in traffic to the wider road network. However, the PA's planning report did raise concerns regarding the level of detail submitted with the application. The first concern related to proposed works at the junction of the private cul-de-sac road and L-4082 public road where one of the two submitted letters of consent only specifies consent for the trimming back of the boundary notwithstanding that a section of the boundary is required to be realigned (as shown on submitted drawing 26-049-01). The second concern related to the submitted swept path analysis including lands outside of the site boundary and which did not extend the full length of the private access laneway from the junction with the private cul-de-sac road. I also note that an observation has raised concerns with the submitted 'Traffic Report' relying on passing areas along the private cul-de-sac road which are in private ownership.
- 8.16. Furthermore, the PA raised concerns regarding the applicants' legal interest to use the private access laneway and considered that further details were required. The Commission should note that the private access laneway is located outside the application boundary of the subject site and outside the control of the applicants and

there is no information provided as part of the application regarding the ownership arrangement or legal consent to use the laneway. Having inspected the laneway on the date of my site inspection, I observed it to be substandard in terms of width and surfacing and in my view would be required to be upgraded to support the proposed development.

- 8.17. Notwithstanding this, the Commission should note that I consider that there is a fundamental deficiency in the submitted application. The submitted drawing (drawing no. 26-049-01) illustrates that 81.5 metres of embankment (including a boundary wall of a third-party dwellinghouse) will be required to be realigned in order to achieve 70 metre sightlines in both directions when exiting the private cul-de-sac road onto the L-4082. However, it should be noted that these proposed works have also not been included within the red-line application boundary of the proposed development site and are outside the applicants' control.
- 8.18. Furthermore, I also share the concerns of the PA with regards to the works within the letter of consent not specifying consent to realign the roadside boundary, however, the fact that these works have not been included within the application boundary is, in my view, the fundamental issue. Having inspected the site, I observed inadequate sightlines at the subject junction when exiting the private road and, therefore, I consider that the junction improvement works would be necessary to accommodate the increased vehicular movements associated with the proposed development. However, on the basis of the information submitted with the application where the proposed improvement works have not been included within the application boundary and are outside applicants' control, I consider that the proposed development would endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard. Therefore, it is my recommendation to the Commission that permission is refused in this regard.

Other Issues

Wastewater Treatment

- 8.19. It is proposed to install a private wastewater treatment plant to service the proposed development. The Commission should note that the application was accompanied by a site characterisation form where the sizing calculations of the proposed wastewater treatment plant were based on a 5-bedroom dwelling and maximum number of 7 no. residents (i.e. population equivalent or PE of 7). However, it should be noted that 5

glamping pods with 5 no. double beds are proposed, which would provide a PE of 10 at full capacity.

- 8.20. I note that whilst the PA did not refuse permission on this matter, it was highlighted and it considered that further details and clarification was required in relation to the sizing of the proposed wastewater treatment system. The Commission may consider this a new issue, however, having regard to the other substantive reasons for refusal, it may not deem it necessary to pursue this matter.

Biodiversity

- 8.21. The Commission should note that policy objective BD 20 of the CDP outlines that there will be a presumption against the removal of hedgerows, however, where their removal is unavoidable, replacement native planting will be required. Furthermore, policy objective BD 21 seeks to preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity of the county by preserving as much hedgerow as possible. Having inspected the junction of the private cul-de-sac road and public road, I observed the roadside 'embankment' (as described on drawing 26-049-01) to be that of an established line of mature hedgerow where 81.5 metres are proposed to be realigned. The Commission should note that there are no proposals provided in relation to the replanting of the native hedgerow and in any case the works are located outside the application boundary and therefore could not be conditioned. I consider this to be contrary to policy objectives BD 20 and BD 21 of the CDP. I consider this to be a new issue, however, having regard to the other substantive reasons for refusal, the Commission may not deem it necessary to pursue this matter.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

- 9.1. I have considered the project in light of the requirements of Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The subject site is located approximately 100 metres west of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002162). I note that the PA concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European site having regard to the location of the site, nature of the development and intervening distance to European sites. The Commission should note that the application was not accompanied by an AA screening report or Natura Impact Statement.

- 9.2. Having inspected the site, I noted that the topographical characteristics of the subject site and intervening lands between the site and SAC sloped down towards the SAC designated site. Furthermore, I note that there have been concerns raised by observations on the appeal regarding the absence of an AA screening report from the prescribed body, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Development Applications Unit or DAU) and a local resident. The DAU has outlined concerns regarding both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development in particular the proposed wastewater treatment facility. It considers that there is a clear potential pathway for impacts arising from wastewater, surface runoff, sediment mobilisation, nutrient enrichment or accidental pollution.
- 9.3. I consider that due to the proximity of the site to the SAC, the nature and topographical characteristics of the site and intervening lands between the site and SAC, the nature of the proposed development which includes the installation of a wastewater treatment plant, the absence of information in relation to surface water management within the site (*question 20 of the submitted application form outlines the proposed surface water disposal as 'not applicable'*), and the absence of an AA screening report, I cannot conclude with certainty that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
- 9.4. I, therefore, consider on the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal that the proposed development would be contrary to policy objectives BD 04 (Appropriate Assessment) and BD 05 (Protection of European Sites) of the CDP. Furthermore, I consider the proposed development contrary to policy objective ECON 25 of the CDP as it has not demonstrated that adverse effects on the River Barrow and River Suir SAC would be avoided.

10.0 Water Framework Directive (WFD)

- 10.1. The subject site is located approximately 100 metres west of the Barrow Suir Nore Estuary Transitional Waterbody (IE_SE_100_0100) which is classed as 'moderate' ecological status or potential and 'At risk' for the 2019-2024 monitoring period. The site is underlain by the Waterford Ground Waterbody (IE_SE_G_149) which is classed as 'Good' and 'not at risk' for the 2019-2024 monitoring period.

10.2. Having regard to my assessment above, and on the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal, including the sizing calculations of the proposed wastewater treatment system being based on a 5-bedroom dwelling and 7PE, as set out in the submitted site characterisation form, and the absence of information in relation to surface water management within the site, it is my view that further information is required before a determination can be made on whether the proposal would result in any risk of deterioration in the status of any waterbody. However, having regard to the other substantive reasons for refusal, the Commission may not deem it necessary to pursue this matter.

11.0 Recommendation

It is my recommendation to the Commission that permission is **REFUSED** for the reasons and considerations set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Policy Objective ECON 24 (Tourism Accommodation) of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 seeks to support a variety of accommodation types, including glamping, and outlines that such accommodation should generally be located within towns and villages unless otherwise justified to the satisfaction of the planning authority. Policy Objective ECON 25 (Camping/Caravan Sites) outlines that camping sites which support rural tourism initiatives developed upon rural enterprise, natural heritage assets and outdoor recreational activities may be facilitated at a rural location subject to the capacity of the site and location.

On the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal, it is considered that the applicants have not demonstrated suitable justification for the siting of the proposed development on a rural site removed from the nearest settlement of Cheekpoint and remote from services, including retail and social facilities. It is acknowledged that the subject site is located in proximity to a designated recreational walking route under the Development Plan, however, it is noted that this route also serves the settlement of Cheekpoint and rural node of Faithlegg. It is considered that there are no other sustainable

connections to any natural heritage assets or outdoor recreational activities notwithstanding the proximity of the site to the shoreline of the River Suir. The proposed development is, therefore, considered contrary to policy objectives ECON 24 and ECON 25 of the Development Plan. Furthermore, the proposal as set out would contribute to the encroachment of random rural development in the area, would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and would set an undesirable precedent for other similar inappropriate development in the vicinity. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. Having regard to the existing deficiency in sightlines at the junction of the private cul-de-sac road and L-4082 public road, and to the increased road traffic that will result from the proposed development, it is considered that on the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal, which proposes sightline improvement works at the said junction which are located outside the redline application boundary of the subject site and which are not under the control of the applicants, would result in the proposed development endangering public safety by reason of a traffic hazard. It is, therefore, considered that the proposed development would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
3. On the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal, and to the absence of an appropriate assessment screening report, and having regard to the separation distance between the site and River Nore and River Barrow Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 002162) and nature and topographical characteristics of intervening lands between the sites, it is considered that there is insufficient information in order to carry out a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening. In the absence of such information, the Commission cannot be satisfied that the proposed development would not result in likely significant effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and in such circumstances, the Commission is precluded from granting permission for the proposed development. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to policy objectives BD04 (Appropriate Assessment) and BD 05 (Protection of European Sites), as well as policy

objective ECON 25 (Camping/Caravan sites), of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Declaration

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

Gary Farrelly
Planning Inspector

7th October 2026

Appendix 1(a): EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-501681-WD-26
Proposed Development Summary	The project involves the construction of a glamping development of 5 no. glamping pods, proprietary wastewater treatment plant and associated works.
Development Address	Coolbunna, Cheekpoint, Waterford
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.	
☒ 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.	
☐ <u>Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.</u> <u>EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</u>	
☒ 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)	<u>Part 2, Class 12</u> 12(c) Holiday villages which would consist of more than 100 holiday homes outside built-up areas; hotel complexes outside built-up areas which would have an area of 20 hectares or more or an accommodation capacity exceeding 300 bedrooms. 12(d) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites where the number of pitches would be greater than 100.
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)

Appendix 1(b): Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
<p>Characteristics of proposed development</p> <p>(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).</p>	<p>The proposed development is for 5 no. glamping pods each measuring 23sqm with the overall site area extending to 0.670 hectares. It is considered that the overall development would not require the use of substantial natural resources or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance. There would be no significant risk of accidents/disasters to human health.</p>
<p>Location of development</p> <p>(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).</p>	<p>The site of the proposed development is located within a rural coastal landscape approximately 100 metres from the shoreline of the River Suir. The site is located within an area of 'High Sensitivity' as outlined in the landscape character assessment of the CDP.</p> <p>The site is located approximately 100 metres from the River Barrow and River Nore SAC and I consider that these AA issues can be adequately dealt with under the Habitats Directive as there is no likelihood of other significant effects on the environment. I refer the Commission to Appendix 2 in this regard.</p>
<p>Types and characteristics of potential impacts</p>	<p>Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development, to likely limited magnitude and spatial</p>

(Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	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.
There is significant and realistic doubt regarding the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	Schedule 7A Information required to enable a Screening Determination to be carried out.
There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIAR required.

Inspector: _____ **Date:** 7th October 2026

Appendix 2: AA Screening

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Case Reference Number:	PL-501681-WD-26
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	The project involves the construction of a glamping development of 5 no. glamping pods, proprietary wastewater treatment plant and associated works.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The subject site measures 0.67 hectares and is located approximately 100 metres from the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. The topography of the subject site and intervening lands (between the site and SAC) slope substantially downwards to the SAC. There are potential impact mechanisms through the downward gradient and via groundwater.
Screening report	No
Natura Impact Statement (NIS)	No
Relevant submissions	The Commission should note that an observation from the prescribed body, the Development Applications Unit (DAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, has raised concerns in relation to the absence of an appropriate assessment (AA) screening report and potential impact on the SAC during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development, in particular the proposed wastewater treatment facility. It considers that there is a clear potential pathway for impacts arising from wastewater, surface runoff, sediment mobilisation, nutrient enrichment or accidental pollution. The Commission should note that a further observation

	from a local resident has raised AA concerns and questioned the absence of an AA screening report.			
Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model				
Having regard to the 100 metre separation distance from the subject site to the nearest European site, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and to the topographical characteristics of the site and intervening lands which slope down towards the European site, I consider that the River Barrow and River Nore SAC is the relevant European site within the zone of influence of the proposed development as outlined in Table 1 below.				
Table 1				
European Site (code)	Qualifying interests	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections	Consider further in screening Y/N
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)	22 QIs https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002162	The subject site is located approximately 100 metres from the European site.	Yes	Yes
Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone <u>or</u> in combination) on European Sites				
I consider that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site. The Commission should note that the applicants have not provided an appropriate assessment (AA) screening report as part of the application or appeal documentation. I consider this to be a significant deficiency in the application having regard to the c. 100 metre separation distance to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, the topographical characteristics of the subject site and intervening lands which slope down towards the European site, the nature of the proposed development which includes construction works and the installation of a private wastewater treatment system, and to the				

inadequate information in relation to surface water management within the subject site. The submitted application form (question 20) outlines that surface water disposal is 'Not Applicable' and the submitted drawings do not illustrate how surface water will be managed. I consider in the absence of an AA screening report, the potential for significant effects cannot be excluded at this stage. Therefore, notwithstanding the conclusions of the PA on this matter, I concur with the recommendation of the DAU.

Uncertain	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone):
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?

Step 4: Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

On the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal and absence of an AA screening report, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the proposed development alone would not result in significant effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC from effects associated with the construction and operational phases of the development. As such, I consider that the Commission is precluded from granting permission for the proposed development in the absence of such information.