



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

PL-501744-GY-26

Development	Installation of a timber frame balcony to a two-storey chalet.
Location	Aill an Phréacháin (Allaphreaghaun), Furbo, Co. Galway, H91 NVY7
Planning Authority	Galway County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	26/60733
Applicant(s)	Eamonn Murray
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Eamonn Murray
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	01-10-2026
Inspector	Adam Kearney.

1.0 Site Location and Description

The appeal site, with a stated area of 0.104 hectares, is in the townland of Aill an Phréacháin, approximately 0.5 kilometres west of Na Forbacha (Furbo), Co. Galway. It adjoins the R336, which forms the Galway Bay Scenic Route and part of the Wild Atlantic Way. local road joins the R336 immediately west of the site.

The site contains a two-storey timber chalet of 79 square metres, clad in stained horizontal timber under a shallow pitched metal roof. It occupies the north-eastern part of the site, with a stone wall and mature trees along the eastern boundary and with Furbog Wood beyond. Its south facing gable addresses the road, with a central glazed door and Juliet guard at first floor level and three windows below. The front door is on the west elevation. A gravel driveway rises from an entrance at the south-western corner to a gravelled area along the west and south sides of the dwelling, with a lawn to the south.

The road frontage comprises a stone wall with dense hedging and trees. On the day of my inspection this screened the dwelling from the R336 directly in front of the site, save for a small part of the roof and the top of the gable. On the approach from the west, the roof and upper floor of the dwelling are visible above the roadside vegetation. The surrounding area is rural and coastal, with dispersed one-off dwellings on both sides of the R336 and Galway Bay to the south.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Permission is sought for the installation of a timber frame balcony to the existing two-storey chalet. The balcony is proposed at first floor level on the south facing gable, accessed from bedroom 1 through the existing glazed door, and would measure 6m x 2.7m giving a stated area of 16.2 square metres. The main dwelling measures 5.7m x 6.9 metres deep, so that the balcony would extend slightly beyond the full width of the gable and project 2.7m forward of it. It does not have side returns.
- 2.2. The deck would be at the existing first floor level of 19.77, carried on three 150mm square timber posts on concrete pads, with timber beams, joists and decking. The balustrade would comprise toughened laminated glass panels set in an aluminium

channel, with timber posts and a timber handrail 1.1m over the deck. No change is proposed to the height or roof of the dwelling.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

- 3.1. Galway County Council issued a Notification of Decision to Refuse Permission by order dated 2nd July 2026 for one reason, as follows:

1. The subject site is located along the Galway Bay Scenic Route within a Class 3 Special Landscape Sensitivity. Noting the site context, adjoining a protected scenic route, within a protected view point angle, to the sensitivities of this Class 3 landscape, it is considered that the balcony if permitted would result in a visually obtrusive feature which would not fit appropriately or assimilate effectively into this rural setting contrary to Policy Objective RH 9, Policy Objective LCM 2, Policy Objective LCM 3, Policy Objective PVSR 1 and DM Standard 4 contained in the Galway County Development Plan, 2022-2028. Accordingly, to grant the proposed development would potentially interfere with the character of the landscape, detract from the visual amenity of the area, militate against the preservation of the rural environment, would set an undesirable precedent for similar future development, contravene policy objectives and a development management standard contained in the current county development plan and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

4.0 Planning Authority Reports

- 4.1. The Executive Planner's report, following a site inspection on 18th May 2026 and endorsed by the Senior Executive Planner, recommended that permission be refused. The report noted the following:
- 4.2. The site is in a Class 3 Special Landscape Sensitivity area in the Coastal Landscape designation, adjoins the Galway Bay Scenic Route and the Wild Atlantic Way, and is within Protected Viewpoint Angle Ref. 29 and the Gaeltacht.
- 4.3. Extensions to a dwelling are considered acceptable in principle.

- 4.4. The two-storey element of the chalet was constructed under P.A. Ref. 22/61264. A balcony sought as part of that application was removed by way of a further information request, the planning authority having deemed the balcony feature not to be in accordance with the Galway Rural Design Guidelines and Policy Objective RH 9, as balcony features are out of character with the pattern of development in this rural area.
- 4.5. The proposed development is not considered in keeping with the landscape character and prevailing architectural type at this location, and to permit it would set an undesirable precedent.
- 4.6. No transportation, water, effluent, flood risk or built heritage issues arise. The site is recorded as straddling the boundary of Furbogh Wood pNHA and as having mature landscaping. EIA and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment were not required.

5.0 Other Technical Reports

None.

5.1. Prescribed Bodies

The planning report records referrals to prescribed bodies and to internal sections of the Council, including the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, An Taisce, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Heritage Officer and the Roads Department, none of which reported.

- 5.2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland made a submission dated 22nd May 2026 in general terms, raising no objection. No national road is affected.

6.0 Third Party Observations

- 6.1. None. No third party submissions or observations were made to the planning authority.

7.0 Planning History

- 7.1. **Subject Site (P.A. Ref. 18/1340):** Permission refused for the partial dismantling of an existing single-storey timber-frame chalet of 39.4 square metres, the construction

of a new first floor extension of 39.4 square metres and balcony, and the relocation of the existing site entrance.

- 7.2. **Subject Site (P.A. Ref. 21/875, ABP-311096-21):** Retention permission refused by the planning authority for an unauthorised single-storey timber-frame chalet of 39.4 square metres with connection to existing site services. Permission was granted on appeal by An Bord Pleanála.
- 7.3. **Subject Site (P.A. Ref. 22/61264):** Permission granted for a second storey extension to the existing single-storey chalet. The application as lodged included a wrap-around balcony along the southern elevation and part of the western elevation. The balcony was omitted following a further information request and permission was granted on revised plans.

8.0 Policy Context

8.1. Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

- 8.1.1. The site is in a rural area classified as Class 3 Special Landscape Sensitivity, defined in the Plan as having a high sensitivity to change. It adjoins the Galway Bay Scenic Route and is recorded by the planning authority as within Protected View Point Angle Ref. 29 (Map 8.4). The provisions cited in the reason for refusal are as follows.
- 8.1.2. DM Standard 4: House Extensions (Urban and Rural) provides that proposed extensions shall:
- In general, be subordinate to the existing dwelling in its size, unless in exceptional cases, a larger extension compliments the existing dwelling in its design and massing;
 - reflect the window proportions, detailing and finishes, texture, materials and colour unless a high quality contemporary and innovatively designed extension is proposed;
 - not have an adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining properties through undue overlooking, undue overshadowing and/or an over dominant visual impact; and

- carefully consider site coverage to avoid unacceptable loss of private open space.

8.1.3. Policy Objective RH 9 (Design Guidelines) requires regard to be had to the Council's Design Guidelines for the Single Rural House, with specific reference to the following:

- *It is the policy objective to encourage new dwelling house design that respects the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately into the landscape;*
- *It is the policy objective to require the appropriate landscaping and screen planting of proposed developments by using predominately indigenous/local species and groupings.*

8.1.4. Policy Objective LCM 2 (Landscape Sensitivity Classification):

The Planning Authority shall have regard to the landscape sensitivity classification of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals and, where necessary, require a Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment to accompany such proposals. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan.

8.1.5. Policy Objective LCM 3 (Landscape Sensitivity Ratings):

Consideration of landscape sensitivity ratings shall be an important factor in determining development uses in areas of the County. In areas of high landscape sensitivity, the design and the choice of location of proposed development in the landscape will also be critical considerations.

8.1.6. Policy Objective PVSR 1 (Protected Views and Scenic Routes):

Preserve the protected views and scenic routes as detailed in Maps 8.3 and 8.4 from development that in the view of the Planning Authority would negatively impact on said protected views and scenic routes. This shall be balanced against the need to develop key infrastructure to meet the strategic aims of the plan

- 8.1.7. Section 8.13.3 of the Plan states that development, where permitted, should not hinder or obstruct protected views and scenic routes ‘but should be located and designed in a manner so as not to negatively impact on these protected views and scenic routes’.

9.0 EIA Screening

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

10.0 The Appeal

10.1. First Party Appeal

- 10.2. A first party appeal was received by the Commission on the 22nd of July 2026. An earlier appeal against the same decision, PL-501741-GY-26, was withdrawn under section 140(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The grounds are summarised as follows.
- 10.3. **Ground 1: The planning authority’s assessment.** The appellant considers the planning report unreliable and asks the Commission to assess the proposal fresh. It says the report mis-describes the site’s relationship with Furbogh Wood pNHA, overstates the history of the balcony omitted under P.A. Ref. 22/61264, and is inconsistent with an earlier report on Protected View 29.
- 10.4. **Ground 2: Application of policy.** No policy in the Plan rules out balconies. LCM 2 is aimed at significant development, Protected View 29 looks seaward and is not affected, and the balcony meets DM Standard 4 as it is open, adds no floor area and does not raise the ridge.
- 10.5. **Ground 3: Visual impact.** The balcony is a light structure below the roofline and would be seen only in limited views from the R336. A narrower balcony was considered and rejected on design grounds.

10.6. **Ground 4: Pattern of development.** Balconies, roof terraces and raised patios are common in the area, and there are around 25 local examples as identified.

10.7. **Ground 5: Proportionality.** No harm has been shown and refusal is disproportionate. Any remaining concern could be dealt with by conditions.

10.8. **Planning Authority Response**

10.9. No response to the first party appeal was received from the planning authority.

10.10. **Observations**

10.11. None.

11.0 **Assessment**

11.1. Having inspected the site, examined the application details, the report of the planning authority, the grounds of appeal and all other documentation on file, and having regard to the relevant provisions of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and to national policy and guidance, I consider the substantive issues in this appeal to be as follows:

- Design and relationship to the existing dwelling
- Landscape and visual impact
- The planning authority's assessment
- Pattern of development
- Residential amenity and conditions

11.2. **Design and Relationship to the Existing Dwelling**

11.2.1. The chalet is a modest two-storey timber dwelling of 79 square metres on a footprint of 5.71 metres by 6.9 metres, with a simple gabled form and a plain south facing gable as its principal elevation. An extension of the structure is acceptable in principle.

11.2.2. The balcony would run across the full width of that gable and project 2.7 metres forward of it at first floor level on timber posts. At 16.2 square metres it equals some

40 per cent of the footprint. Although it is open and sits below the ridge, it would read as an addition to the building at first floor level and would become the dominant element of the principal elevation. I do not consider it subordinate to the dwelling, and a full width deck on posts does not complement the simple form of the chalet so as to bring it within the exception in DM Standard 4.

11.2.3. The appellant notes that the balcony is open, adds no internal floor area, does not raise the ridge and has slender supports, transparent glazing and no side returns. I accept those facts, and I agree that no policy in the Plan rules out a balcony as such. The first test in DM Standard 4, however, is whether an extension is subordinate to the existing dwelling in its size. A first floor platform of 16.2 square metres projecting beyond a footprint of 39.4 square metres is a substantial addition to a building of this size, whether or not it is enclosed.

11.2.4. I have had regard to ABP-320496-24 (Errisbeg East, Roundstone), where the Board granted a balcony on a one-off dwelling under the same Plan. I take the same view as the Board on LCM 2, the protected view and residential amenity. The Board found that balcony subordinate because it was formed within the footprint of the existing building and added no floor space. This balcony projects beyond the footprint across the full width of the principal elevation, and the decision does not assist on that point.

11.2.5. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with DM Standard 4. I have had regard to Policy Objective RH 9, but DM Standard 4 is the standard that applies to an alteration of an existing dwelling.

11.3. Landscape and Visual Impact

11.3.1. While LCM 2 only applies to significant development proposals, LCM 3 makes design a critical consideration in this Class 3 Special area.

11.3.2. Paragraphs 11.3.2 and 11.3.3 concern the Galway Bay Scenic Route along the R336, which is a separate designation from Protected View 29, considered at paragraph 11.3.4. Directly in front of the site the dwelling is largely screened by the roadside wall and vegetation. On the approach from the west along the R336, however, the roof and upper floor are seen above the hedgerow, as the appellant's own imagery also shows. From that direction the balcony would be seen in profile, projecting towards the road at upper floor level. It would add to the visible bulk of the dwelling and increase its prominence in views from the scenic route.

- 11.3.3. The appellant's roadside photographs seek to show that the chalet is seen only in limited views, and I accept that views of it from the road are limited. The approach from the west is, however, where the balcony would be most apparent, and the absence of a formal viewpoint analysis does not alter what I observed on site. The scenic route is experienced through its roadside landscape as well as its views of the sea, and section 8.13.3 of the Plan states that development should be located and designed so as not to negatively impact upon it.
- 11.3.4. With regard to Protected View 29, the planning report does not explain how the site enters that view, and the appellant points out that the 2023 report on the same site placed it outside any protected view. The appellant's account of the view as a seaward view from the Furbo Beach car park is not contradicted on file, and the appellant cites the inspector's report in ABP-314986-22 to the same effect. I have no evidence that the balcony would be discernible from that perspective.
- 11.3.5. I conclude that, having regard to LCM 3, the balcony would negatively impact on the Galway Bay Scenic Route, contrary to PVSR 1, and would detract from the visual amenities of the area.

11.4. The Planning Authority's Assessment

- 11.4.1. The appellant considers the planning report unreliable and asks for a fresh assessment. The Commission determines the appeal de novo, and my conclusions rest on my own inspection and assessment of the proposal.
- 11.4.2. The Department's observations of 16th September 2021, cited by the appellant, describe the site as adjacent to Furbogh Wood pNHA rather than within it. Either way, the works are confined to an area in front of the south gable and would not affect the woodland, and the pNHA did not form part of the reason for refusal.
- 11.4.3. I agree with the appellant that no decision was made on the balcony proposed under P.A. Ref. 22/61264. It was omitted at further information stage and the second storey was permitted on revised plans. I have recorded that history but assigned it no weight.

11.5. Pattern of Development

- 11.5.1. Balconies and raised terraces exist along this stretch of the R336, as the appellant's survey of around 25 properties shows, and I do not rely on the planning authority's

view that they are out of character. The nearest of the six comparators cited, P.A. Ref. 07/1258, some 150 metres away, permitted two first floor balconies on a building between the road and the sea. Others involve a balcony within a substantial extension or a contemporary dwelling, and the closest in form, P.A. Ref. 95/398, was decided over thirty years ago. All were lodged before the current Plan came into effect, each case is determined on its own merits, and the examples do not answer the relationship of this balcony to this dwelling.

11.6. Residential Amenity and Conditions

- 11.6.1. The balcony would face over the appellant's own garden and overlook the R336. No undue overlooking or overbearing effect would arise. There were no third party objected, but that does not answer the effect on the scenic route, which is a matter of public amenity.
- 11.6.2. The appellant suggests conditions on finishes, low reflectivity glazing, retention of planting and a prohibition on enclosure. These could deal with the finish of the balcony but not its width, projection or position on the principal elevation, which are the source of my concern. A planting condition could only retain the existing screening, which does not screen the upper floor from the west. A reduction sufficient to make the balcony subordinate would amount to a redesign, and the appellant has considered and rejected a narrower option. As the Impact arises from the fundamental form of the proposal, I do not consider refusal disproportionate.

12.0 AA Screening

- 12.1. I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements of section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The site is not within or adjacent to a European site. The nearest European sites are the Connemara Bog Complex SAC c. 4km, and the Connemara Bog Complex SPA c. 6km, with six further European sites within 15 km. Furbogh Wood pNHA adjoins or partly overlaps the eastern part of the site; it is not a European site. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the appeal.
- 12.2. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- the very small scale and nature of the works, an open deck attached to an existing dwelling within its curtilage, with no increase in wastewater loading or hard surfacing;
- the distance from the nearest European site and the absence of hydrological or other ecological pathways;
- taking into account the screening determination of the planning authority, which reached the same conclusion.

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

13.0 Water Framework Directive

13.1. The development is an open balcony on an existing dwelling served by an existing septic tank, percolation area and soakaway, with no increase in wastewater loading or surface water run-off. The nearest water body is the coastal water of Galway Bay to the south. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the appeal.

13.2. I have considered the objectives set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive, which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface and ground water bodies in order to reach good status, meaning both good chemical and good ecological status, and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface or groundwater body either qualitatively or quantitatively, for the following reasons:

- the very small scale and nature of the works;
- the distance from the nearest water body and the absence of any direct hydrological connection.

13.3. I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration of any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively, or on a temporary or

permanent basis, or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives, and consequently it can be excluded from further assessment.

14.0 Recommendation

14.1. I recommend that permission be refused for the proposed development for the reason and considerations set out below.

15.0 Reasons and Considerations

15.1. Having regard to the location of the site adjoining the Galway Bay Scenic Route (R336) in an area classified as Class 3 Special Landscape Sensitivity in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, where Policy Objective LCM 3 (Landscape Sensitivity Ratings) makes design a critical consideration, to the modest scale and simple gabled form of the existing two-storey timber chalet on the site, and to the visibility of the dwelling from the scenic route on the approach from the west, it is considered that the proposed balcony, by reason of its extent across the full width of the principal south facing gable and its projection of 2.7 metres beyond the footprint of the dwelling at first floor level on timber posts, would not be subordinate to the existing dwelling, would not complement its design and massing, and would form the dominant element of its principal elevation.

The proposed development would increase the prominence of the dwelling in views from the scenic route, would conflict with DM Standard 4 (House Extensions (Urban and Rural)) and Policy Objective PVSR 1 (Protected Views and Scenic Routes) of the Plan, would detract from the visual amenities of the area, and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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

Adam Kearney

Planning Inspector

11th October 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-501744-GY-26
Proposed Development Summary	Installation of a timber frame balcony to an existing two-storey chalet.
Development Address	Aill an Phréacháin (Allaphreaghaun), Furbo, Co. Galway, H91 NVY7
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? (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)	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2. ☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in <u>Part 1</u>, 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.	
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3.	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in <u>Part 2</u>, 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	
☐ 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)	
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 ☐	
No ☒	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: _____