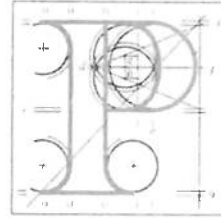


Our Case Number: ACP-324624-26



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Gary Colgan
29 Páirc na hAbhainn
Athenry
Galway

Date: 15 October 2026

Re: Proposed Development in Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway

Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Coimisiún Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please be advised that there is no fee to make a submission on this case. A refund will be issued to the credit/debit card used to make this payment in due course.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Commission at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Coimisiún Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Commission.

Yours faithfully,

Lauren Griffin
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737244

AA02



An
Coinisiún
Pleanála

SID Online Observation

Online Reference
SID-OBS-006150

Online Observation Details

Contact Name
Gary Colgan

Lodgement Date
09/10/2026 11:45:58

Case Number / Description
324624

Payment Details

Payment Method
Online Payment

Cardholder Name
Gary Colgan

Payment Amount
€50.00

Fee Refund Requisition

Please Arrange a Refund of Fee of

€ 50

Lodgement No

LDG—

Reason for Refund

No fee for this case type

Documents Returned to Observer

☐

Yes

☒

No

Request Emailed to Senior Executive Officer for Approval

☒

Yes

☐

No

Signed

EO

Laurence aff

Date

15/10/26

Finance Section

Payment Reference

ch_3UObJKB1CW0EN5FC1uD0XP47

Checked Against Fee Income Online

EO/AA (Accounts Section)

Amount

€

Refund Date

Authorised By (1)

SEO (Finance)

Date

Authorised By (2)

Chief Officer/Director of Corporate Affairs/SAO/Board
Member

Date

FORMAL OBSERVATION / OBJECTION

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Re: Proposed 16-Unit Residential Development at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway
Case Reference: JP07.324624
Procedure: Section 177AE(4)(a) / Part 10

Dear Secretary,

I wish to formally object to the proposed development of 16 houses at Páirc na hAbhainn and respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse the application in its entirety.

I am a resident of No. 29 Páirc na hAbhainn. Residents in this part of the estate have lived for more than 17 years with open land behind their homes. During that time, this open land has become part of the character of the estate and of the environment in which we live.

I recognise the need for affordable housing and I am not opposed to appropriate housing development in Athenry. My objection is to this particular proposal, on this particular site and in this particular form, and to the combined impact it would have on the people who already live here.

In my view, the issue is not simply whether 16 houses can physically be put on this land. The question is whether this scale, height and layout of development can be accommodated without an unacceptable effect on existing homes, residential amenity, privacy, security, light, drainage, safety and quality of life. I do not believe that it can.

The permanent change to the existing homes

The proposal would replace the open land behind existing homes with 16 two-storey houses, roads, parking, footpaths, lighting and associated infrastructure. What currently provides separation and an open outlook would become another occupied residential area immediately beside the existing houses. The impact should be considered from the point of view of the people who already live here, rather than simply by asking whether individual technical standards are met.

The application identifies approximately 5.5 metres of level difference across the site, with the most significant gradient towards the north-east. The applicant also acknowledges that proposed Unit 09-B is approximately 1.8 metres higher than No. 31 at ground level. These are important differences in level when considering the relationship between two-storey houses and existing rear gardens.

The Design Report says that, after investigating the topography, the layout was adjusted to accommodate the maximum number of semi-detached units. This raises an important planning question: should the difficult topography be used to fit the maximum number of houses onto the site, or should the form and scale of the development be reduced to respond properly to the existing homes? I believe the latter deserves much greater consideration.

Privacy, security and the change in outlook

The proposal would fundamentally change the privacy and security relationship between the new development and the existing homes. Instead of open land beyond the rear boundaries, residents would have occupied two-storey houses, upper-floor windows, rear gardens, lighting and increased activity immediately beyond those boundaries.

The applicant proposes native hedgerow planting along the northern boundary. However, a newly planted hedge is not an immediate substitute for the existing open outlook. It will take time to

mature and will depend on proper long-term maintenance. Nor does it change the basic fact that open ground will be replaced by occupied two-storey housing. The Commission should consider the long-term relationship between the existing and proposed homes, including building height, finished levels, boundary treatment, privacy and security, rather than relying mainly on future planting to resolve these concerns.

Loss of light

The Design Report acknowledges that Nos. 27 to 30 will experience some overshadowing from the proposed terrace houses during the early afternoon at the winter solstice. I do not believe this should simply be accepted because the impact has been described as minor. For residents affected, it is a permanent change to the sunlight reaching their homes and gardens.

This needs to be considered alongside the steep topography and elevated relationship between the proposed houses and existing properties. The Commission should consider whether lower buildings, lower finished levels or a reduction in the scale of development along the northern boundary could materially reduce the impact.

Drainage, runoff and flooding

I have serious concerns about surface water and drainage. The development would replace open greenfield ground with houses, roads, driveways, footpaths and other hard surfaces, permanently altering how water moves across the site. The environmental documents recognise the difficulties created by the slope. The EIA Screening Report states that substantial cut-and-fill works will be required, that surface-water patterns will be altered, and that there is an elevated risk of sediment release during construction because of the steep slopes.

The Ecological Impact Assessment identifies erosion risk and challenging drainage management as a Moderate Negative impact before mitigation. I acknowledge that an engineered drainage system is proposed. My concern is whether it provides sufficient protection to the existing estate in all realistic circumstances.

The proposed surface-water system will ultimately discharge into the existing surface-water network serving Páirc na hAbhainn. The civil design provides approximately 142m³ of attenuation against a calculated requirement of approximately 139m³ for the stated design event. That does not by itself prove the design is inadequate, but it makes it important that the Commission is satisfied about what happens when the system is under exceptional pressure.

I ask what happens if the attenuation system reaches capacity, a drainage inlet or flow-control device becomes blocked, rainfall exceeds the design scenario, or the receiving estate drainage network is already under stress. Most importantly, where does excess water safely go? Existing houses and gardens should not be placed at additional risk by development of this site.

The application identifies the nearby Clarinbridge River as having a Water Framework Directive status of Moderate and At Risk, while the site is in an area identified as having High groundwater vulnerability. The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report could not initially exclude significant effects on water-quality-dependent interests of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA through the surface-water pathway, which is why a Natura Impact Statement was required. While the NIS subsequently concludes that the proposed mitigation is sufficient, the local consequences of drainage and runoff for existing residents still require careful assessment.

The wider development taking place around Páirc na hAbhainn

This proposal should not be considered in isolation from the amount of development already taking place or approved around the estate. There are 49 houses under construction in the nearby Baunmore and Gortnahown area. There is also an approved camogie sports facility in the wider adjoining area, for which construction has not yet commenced.

These projects represent further construction, traffic, earthworks, drainage, roads, lighting, parking and activity within an area that is already changing substantially. The environmental

assessment for the proposed 16 houses anticipates a construction period of approximately 18-24 months, involving excavation, machinery, construction traffic, noise, vibration, dust and increased erosion and sediment risks.

Residents are already living beside construction associated with the 49 houses. If this proposal proceeds, they could then face another prolonged period of construction traffic, machinery, deliveries, noise, dust and disruption. That is not a trivial temporary inconvenience. It is a cumulative burden on an established residential community.

The approved camogie facility is also relevant to the wider cumulative picture because it will introduce another significant use in the immediate area, with its own access, parking, lighting, pitch drainage and surface-water arrangements. I am not claiming that the sports facility will cause flooding. I am asking that the Commission be satisfied that the combined effects of these permitted and proposed developments have been properly considered, particularly regarding drainage, runoff, traffic and the overall impact on existing residents.

Access through the existing estate

Access remains a major concern, but it is one part of my objection to the overall development rather than the sole reason for objecting. The proposed 16 houses are to be accessed through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. The existing roads have narrow sections, bends, slopes and parking constraints. In everyday use, there are areas where residents experience difficulty when vehicles approach one another, and larger vehicles can struggle to pass through narrower sections.

The existing Road Safety Audit identified issues around the development interface and the turning head, where long-term parking was observed and parked vehicles could interfere with vehicles leaving the proposed development. It also recommended further assessment of the full detailed design before construction.

The issue should not be reduced to whether the wider road network can theoretically accommodate another 16 houses. The Commission should consider whether the existing estate is an appropriate route for the additional permanent traffic and construction traffic, taking into account the actual condition of its roads and how they are used by residents every day.

Children and everyday safety

Páirc na hAbhainn is a family residential estate. Children walk, cycle and play here, and the internal roads form part of their everyday environment. The roads include bends, changes in level and areas of restricted visibility. Parking can also reduce the available road space and bring pedestrians and vehicles into closer contact.

Additional traffic from 16 homes will increase that interaction, and construction traffic would make the situation more difficult during the building period. I remain particularly concerned that there is no specific assessment of child safety on the existing Páirc na hAbhainn roads. Extensive discussion of traffic generation and road capacity does not answer the practical question of how additional traffic will affect children who already walk and cycle around the estate.

A road can have sufficient theoretical capacity for vehicles while still becoming a less safe environment for children and other vulnerable road users. This distinction deserves proper weight.

The existing estate and Galway County Council's record of maintenance

I believe the condition and management of the existing estate is directly relevant to this application. I have lived in Páirc na hAbhainn for more than 17 years and have experienced first-hand the difficulties residents have had in getting the estate properly maintained.

When the estate was established, I signed an estate maintenance contract under which residents were required to pay an annual contribution of approximately €160 per household. Galway County Council initially collected those charges, then stopped collecting them. Residents had to

put pressure on the Council before collection was resumed, but the charges were subsequently stopped again.

In 2017, I took the matter to the Ombudsman in an effort to get Galway County Council to address its responsibilities for the estate. Following that process, the Council did not resume a continuing maintenance charge from residents. Its maintenance activity was effectively limited to grass cutting, while shrubs, landscaped areas and other communal features were left without the level of upkeep they required and were allowed to deteriorate.

Since then, the Council has not collected maintenance contributions from residents, yet grass cutting has continued. This raises an obvious question: how is the continuing grass cutting now funded, and has that cost in effect been transferred to public funds? Who is responsible for maintaining the other communal areas? The Commission should also be satisfied about what arrangements will apply to the additional communal areas proposed under this development.

The condition of the estate includes damaged and uneven block paving, deterioration around drainage and utility covers, neglected landscaping, damaged shrubs and fencing, and other communal areas requiring attention. Please see the images on the final page, which illustrate examples of damaged paving and the condition of shared areas within the estate.

Based on my experience of living in Páirc na hAbhainn and trying to get existing communal infrastructure maintained, I have very little confidence that the proposed landscaping and communal areas will automatically be maintained to an acceptable standard over the long term. This is directly relevant because the proposal includes new trees, wildflower areas, pathways, street trees and native hedgerow planting along the northern boundary.

Those proposals may look attractive on a planning drawing, but landscaping is only an asset to the community if it is properly maintained over its lifetime. I ask the Commission to require a clear, credible and properly funded arrangement for the long-term management and maintenance of the proposed communal spaces before treating this as an acceptable development.

A better use for the remaining open land

I also believe the Commission should consider whether this site has a better long-term use than being completely built over. The land has remained open for more than 17 years and provides a buffer between existing homes and the expanding development around the estate.

The applicant describes the existing grassland as having relatively low ecological value. However, the value of this land to the community cannot be measured solely by ecological classification. It provides an open outlook, visual separation, a sense of space, contact with nature and relief from the increasingly developed surroundings.

Instead of converting the entire site to housing, I ask the Commission to consider whether it could be rewilded as a community green space. A properly designed rewilded area could include native wildflower meadows, trees and hedgerows, habitat areas and carefully designed paths. It could support pollinators, birds and other wildlife, improve biodiversity, retain more permeable ground and help slow surface-water runoff, contribute to local cooling and climate resilience, and offer residents a green place for quiet recreation and contact with nature.

Such an approach would retain an important green buffer and deliver lasting environmental and community benefits without introducing another concentration of housing, traffic and hard surfaces into an area already undergoing substantial development. I believe this alternative deserves serious consideration.

Overall impact

The individual elements of this proposal may be presented as manageable when considered separately. That is not how existing residents will experience the development. We will experience the combined effect: the loss of open land; two-storey houses on changing ground levels immediately behind existing homes; changes to privacy, security, outlook and light; additional traffic through the estate; safety concerns for children and pedestrians; a prolonged construction period; major development already taking place nearby; drainage and erosion challenges on a steep site; and additional communal infrastructure whose long-term maintenance has not been demonstrated through the experience of the existing estate.

The Commission should consider whether the overall development is appropriate for this location and compatible with the residential environment that already exists. In my view, the application has not adequately demonstrated that it is.

Conclusion

I strongly object to the proposed 16-house development and respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse the application in its entirety.

I am not opposed to affordable housing. My objection is to placing this particular development, at this scale, height and intensity, on a difficult sloping site immediately beside an established residential community. The proposal would permanently remove open land, introduce two-storey houses on changing ground levels immediately behind existing homes, create concerns about privacy, security and light, add traffic to a constrained estate, increase risks for children and pedestrians, create a prolonged construction burden, and add drainage and runoff pressures in an area already undergoing substantial development.

The surrounding 49-house development and approved camogie facility reinforce the need to consider cumulative effects on the existing community rather than assessing these 16 houses in isolation. The maintenance history of the existing estate also raises legitimate questions about the long-term management of the new communal landscaping and infrastructure.

The fundamental issue is whether this particular development can be integrated into the existing community without causing an unacceptable cumulative impact on residential amenity, safety, drainage, the environment and quality of life. I do not believe the application has demonstrated that it can.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse the proposed development in its entirety.

Thanks and Regards,

Gary Colgan
29 Páirc na hAbhainn
Athenry, Co. Galway

Signature: _____

Date: 09 / 10 / 2026

EXISTING ESTATE IMAGES

