

An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Observation on a Planning Appeal: Form.

### Your details

#### 1. Observer's details (person making the observation)

If you are making the observation, write your full name and address.

If you are an agent completing the observation for someone else, write the observer's details:

Your full details:

(a) Name

Emma Healy

(b) Address

Ardsallagh, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon

### Agent's details

#### 2. Agent's details

If you are an agent and are acting for someone else **on this observation**, please **also** write your details below.

If you are not using an agent, please write "Not applicable" below.

(a) Agent's name

Not applicable

(b) Agent's address

Click or tap here to enter text.

## Postal address for letters

3. During the appeal process we will post information and items to you **or** to your agent. For this observation, who should we write to? (Please tick ✓ one box only.)

You (the observer) at the address in Part 1

The agent at the address in Part 2

## Details about the proposed development

4. Please provide details about the appeal you wish to make an observation on. If you want, you can include a copy of the planning authority's decision as the observation details.

**(a) Planning authority**

(for example: Ballytown City Council)

Roscommon County Council

**(b) An Bord Pleanála appeal case number (if available)**

(for example: ABP-300000-19)

RL20.322287

**(c) Planning authority register reference number**

(for example: 18/0123)

DED 845

**(d) Location of proposed development**

(for example: 1 Main Street, Baile Fearainn, Co Abhaile)

Academy House, Goff Street, Ballypheasan,  
Roscommon Town, Co. Roscommon.

## Observation details

5. Please describe the grounds of your observation (planning reasons and arguments). You can type or write them in the space below or you can attach them separately.

E

Dear Sir/Madam,

I formally object to the Class 20F exemption application by Noel Whelan to change the use of Academy House, Goff Street, Roscommon Town, to temporary accommodation for international protection applicants.

While I recognise the recent need to support those seeking international protection, I have significant concerns about the suitability of this proposal for the reasons outlined below. This proposal misaligns with the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 by undermining the town centre's economic vitality, straining services and infrastructure, and lacks transparent public consultation.

### **1. Inadequate public consultation and transparency**

The Class 20F exemption restricts public consultation, contrary to the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028's commitment to community engagement (Policy CD 2.3). An informal poll (56.2% oppose, 31.6% support, 12.1% neutral, 2,948 votes; see attached) highlights significant public concern. The proposal's omission of critical details, including resident numbers, duration of use, and management plans, undermines transparency, obstructing the assessment of economic and social impacts essential to Roscommon's businesses and contravening the Development Plan's commitment to transparent planning.

### **2. Unsuitability of the site location**

Academy House's central location in a busy commercial area is unsuitable for high-occupancy accommodation. Its proximity to shops risks exacerbating traffic and parking pressures on Goff Street, where congestion is noted (Roscommon County Council Traffic Report, 2024). Without assessing the site's capacity or impact on the town centre's functionality, the proposal breaches the Plan's sustainable development objectives (Policy SD 1.1), threatening business operations.

### **3. Pressure on local services and infrastructure**

The Plan requires developments to avoid straining infrastructure (Policy INF 1.2). Roscommon Town's existing services, including healthcare, education, and social support, are already stretched. The proposed accommodation, intended for international protection applicants whose applications are pending and who are not yet deemed eligible for asylum, may require specialised support, placing additional strain on local resources.

Academy House being used as emergency accommodation may increase demand on Roscommon's limited healthcare and emergency services. Roscommon University Hospital lacks an emergency department and operates a limited Injury Unit (8 am-8 pm)

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and Medical Assessment Unit (9 am-5 pm, weekdays, GP referral only) (Saolta University Health Care Group, 2024). With 33% of residents living over 50 km from an emergency department and 50% traveling 5 km or more to a GP (Central Statistics Office, 2019), the proposal's failure to specify resident numbers or support needs undermines its ability to demonstrate service capacity. The application provides no evidence that local services can accommodate increased demand, particularly for medical care or integration programmes, risking impacts on residents and businesses reliant on efficient infrastructure.

**4. Lack of management and oversight details**

The application does not outline a clear management plan for the proposed facility, including security protocols and resident support. International protection applicants in IPAS accommodation are in a vulnerable position, awaiting decisions on their claims. Without robust oversight, there is a risk of operational challenges or safety concerns, potentially impacting both residents and the surrounding community.

**5. Potential impact on community cohesion and tourism**

The introduction of a new accommodation facility in a central location, coupled with limited community consultation, could strain social cohesion. The Development Plan promotes cohesive communities and tourism (Policy TOU 1.1, Policy CD 1.2). Limited consultation and opposition found in the aforementioned poll (56.2% oppose) highlights public concerns, and shows the potential of deterring tourists. A 10% drop in visitor spending could cost businesses €500,000 annually (Roscommon Tourism Report, 2023), breaching the Plan's economic objectives.

**6. Potential conflict with heritage and urban design**

The Plan protects Roscommon's heritage and urban character (Policy HER 1.2). Academy House, situated in the centre of Roscommon Town and near protected structures (e.g., Roscommon Castle precinct), risks aesthetic disruption through modifications or activity. This could reduce the town's appeal, breaching heritage policies and harming tourism-dependent businesses.

**7. Risk of precedent for future exemptions**

Approving this Class 20F exemption could prompt further applications, resulting in an uncoordinated proliferation of similar facilities in Roscommon Town. This would disrupt the town's economic and demographic balance without strategic planning oversight, contravening the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028's coordinated development objectives (Policy SP 1.1) and threatening commercial space availability and economic stability.

**8. Incompatibility with Town Centre zoning and economic objectives**

5. Please describe the grounds of your observation (planning reasons and arguments). You can type or write them in the space below or you can attach them separately.

Roscommon Town is a key service centre, with the town centre zoned for retail and commercial uses (Policy ED 3.1, Draft Local Area Plan 2024-2030). Converting Academy House to temporary emergency accommodation demotes commercial development in the town centre, and limits retail development. Without thorough assessment, it will likely reduce footfall vital to local businesses, hindering Roscommon's economic development potential, and breaching the Roscommon County Development Plan's objectives for retail and commercial growth.

The Class 20F exemption fundamentally contravenes the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028, jeopardising zoning integrity, heritage preservation, infrastructure capacity and tourism-driven economic vitality. As a business representative on the Roscommon County Council Strategic Policy Committee for Roads, Planning, and Emergency Services, I strongly oppose this proposal's clear threat to Roscommon Town's commercial core through diminished footfall, disrupted retail activity, and compromised economic sustainability. Its inadequate consultation and precedent-setting risks amplify these breaches. I urgently call on An Bord Pleanála to refuse this Class 20F exemption, which contravenes the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 by undermining the town centre's commercial sustainability and economic growth, to uphold Roscommon Town's strategic role as a thriving retail and tourism hub.

Please confirm receipt and include this in Case Reference 322287 considerations. Contact me at [emma@roscommonpeople.ie](mailto:emma@roscommonpeople.ie) or (086) 377 8595.

Yours sincerely,  
Emma Healy.

## Supporting materials

6. If you wish, you can include supporting materials with your observation.

Supporting materials include:

- photographs,
- plans,
- surveys,
- drawings,
- digital videos or DVDs,
- technical guidance, or
- other supporting materials.

**As the service and administrative centre of the county, Roscommon town serves as an important economic driver and employment centre, with a significant retail, commercial and manufacturing presence.**

### RN 22

#### Fee

Promote Roscommon town as a destination for enterprise and new economic growth opportunities. Encourage appropriate new business ventures into the town core. Promote the uptake of vacant units in order to enhance the character of the streetscape in order to make it a more attractive location for potential investors.

**This Plan seeks to promote economic activity in town and village centres by setting out a policy position that will be attractive to new businesses and will assist the consolidation of existing businesses.**

## 1.6 Strategic Aims

The table below identifies the Strategic Aims for the future development of County Roscommon, which are further expanded upon and given policy expression in subsequent chapters of this Plan.

**Table 1.1 Strategic Aims for the Future Development of County Roscommon**

No.	Strategic Aim
4	Promote the highest quality living environment possible, in both urban and rural areas, for all inhabitants of County Roscommon to enjoy.
6	Promote the development of the towns and villages throughout County Roscommon to their full economic and social potential in order to support and enhance both the resident/hinterland community and economic and employment base and to enable towns and villages become self-sustaining, sustainable and balanced.
12	Foster the creation of an attractive and competitive business environment by supporting economic development, job creation, tourism and prosperity for all.

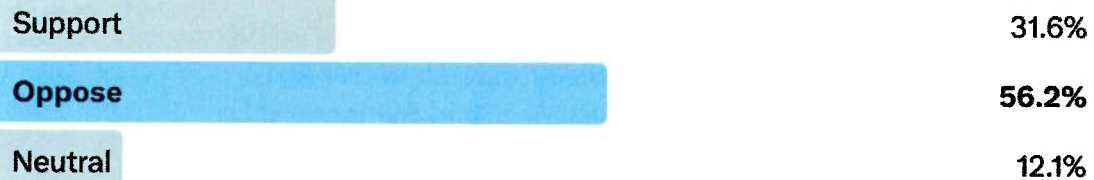


**Roscommon People** ✓  
@RoscommonPeople

Promote



After recent speculation that a property in Roscommon Town has been earmarked for asylum seeker accommodation, we're asking for readers' thoughts...



2,948 votes · Final results

7. You **must** make sure that the correct **fee** is included with your observation. You can find out the correct fee to include in our [Fees and Charges Guide](#) on our website.

This document has been awarded a Plain English mark by NALA.

Last updated: April 2019.

