

Limerick City & County Council

Re: Part 8 Proposal for the following:

Part 8 proposal, Reference PT8LL365 – The development will consist of the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services. The proposal has undergone Appropriate Assessment Screening in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and screening for Environmental Impact Assessment under the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick.

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Determination

Pursuant to the requirements of the above Limerick City & County Council is proposing, at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services.

The plans and particulars were placed on public display from the 19th March, 2026 up to and including 20th April, 2026, and submissions and observations were invited up to the 6th of June, 2026 in accordance with the requirements of Part XI of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

Having regard to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and (inter alia) the Department of Housing Planning Community and Local Government's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010), screening of the development for Appropriate Assessment was carried out by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd on behalf of the Community Sport and Rural Development Directorate of Limerick City and County Council.

An Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information provided in the Screening report, the scale of the development and the size of the site, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites. Therefore, this proposed project does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment Process. Appropriate Assessment Screening has determined that there is no potential for likely significant effects on any European sites.

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the application for consent for the proposed development does not require an Appropriate Assessment or the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Order: That Limerick City & County Council as the Competent Authority having considered the AA Screening Report prepared by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd makes a determination that, when considered either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will not be required to accompany the proposal for the development which will consist of the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick.



Dr. Pat Daly

Director General

Limerick City & County Council

Date: 12/6/24.

**MAYOR'S REPORT & RECOMMENDATION IN ACCORDANCE
WITH SECTION 179 3(a) OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)**

Re: Part 8 Proposal for the following:

The development will consist of the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services.

1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared pursuant to Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

2.0 Description of the nature and extent of the proposed development

The proposed development is for:

- the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel;
- internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities;
- internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas;
- replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles;
- installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace;
- installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof;
- and connection to all existing services.

The proposed development is for the change of use of the former Bank of Ireland to residential and hostel use at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. The application site consists of a three-storey former bank located on The Square. The site is 0.0914 hectares. At present the building is vacant.

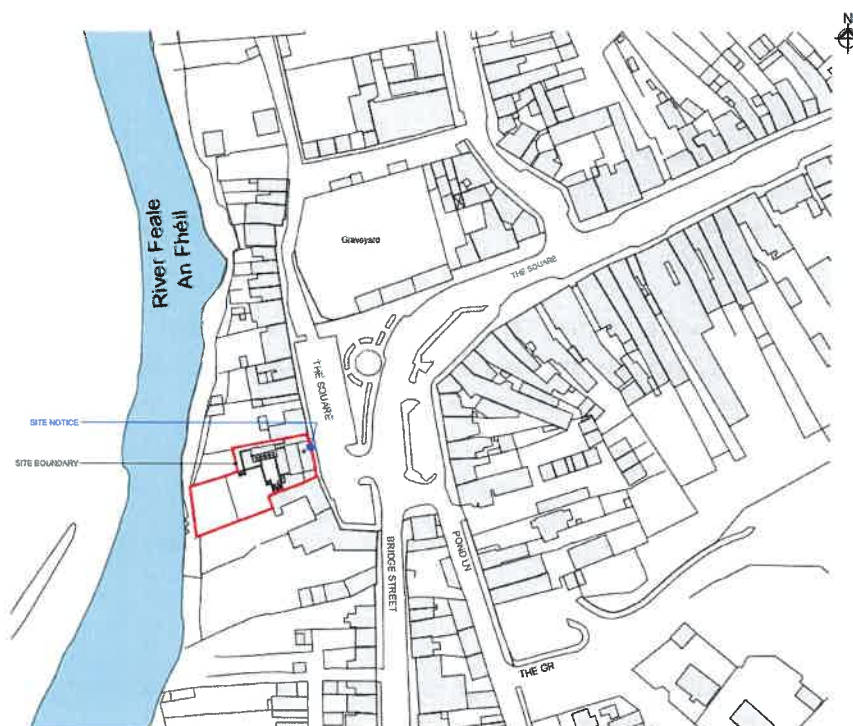


Plate 1 **Site Location**



Plate 2 View of the site from The Square.

2.1 Public Consultation:

The plans and particulars were placed on public display from the 19th March, 2026 up to and including 20th April, 2026. Submissions and observations were invited up to the 6th of June, 2026.

3.0 Submissions with respect to the proposed development

1 third party submission/observation and 1 statutory body submissions/observation were received and are listed below:

No.	Name
1.	Ann Mc Carthy, 54 Collins Park, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, V94D8X0
2.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

SUB (1) Ann Mc Carthy

Submission Summary:

Submission has been received objecting to the proposed development, a summary of the key points, is presented below:

1. The proposed development comprises the change of use of the former Bank of Ireland building to provide for hostel accommodation and associated

works, as the proposed development materially contravenes, the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023–2029, is inconsistent with the Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028, and does not accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The proposed development conflicts with Town Centre First Strategy, which promotes consolidation of the town centre as a vibrant retail, service, commercial and community hub. The reuse of buildings is intended to support active ground-floor uses, economic activity, residential development and increased footfall. The proposed hostel represents a single-use, inward-looking accommodation model which does not provide an active commercial or service function, does not contribute to employment, or retail activity, and does not support permanent population growth within the town centre. The proposal therefore fails to align with the core Town Centre First objectives and undermines the intended function of the Square.
3. The proposed development contravenes the Core Strategy, which promotes compact growth through the consolidation and regeneration of existing settlements, with a focus on housing, employment and sustainable communities. The subject site is a strategically located town centre building. The proposed use does not deliver housing, does not support employment or service provision, and does not contribute to sustainable community development. It therefore fails to align with the intent of the Core Strategy.
4. The proposed development conflicts with Retail and Economic Strategy, which seeks to strengthen town centres as the primary retail and service locations and to protect their vitality and viability. The proposed development removes a prominent building from potential commercial or service use, provides no active frontage, and does not contribute to daytime economic activity or footfall. It therefore conflicts with retail and economic objectives.
5. Failure to Support Settlement Strategy - Abbeyfeale is designated as a Level 3 Town with a defined role to provide services, employment and housing. The proposed use does not contribute to these functions and therefore does not support the role of Abbeyfeale within the settlement hierarchy.
6. The proposed development does not contribute to housing supply or permanent population and instead introduces a transient occupancy model inconsistent with these objectives, accordingly it is inconsistent with Housing and Sustainable Community Objectives.
7. The development is likely to increase short-term parking demand, drop-off activity and pressure on limited town centre parking, to the detriment of retail and service users. No adequate assessment of parking demand, servicing arrangements or traffic impact has been demonstrated.
8. The proposed use introduces high turnover, short-stay occupancy and potential for increased noise and disturbance. This differs significantly from the stable residential and commercial environment envisaged for the town centre and raises concerns regarding compatibility with surrounding uses.

9. No evidence has been provided demonstrating a specific need for hostel accommodation of this type in Abbeyfeale, particularly in a prime town centre location.
10. The subject building occupies a prominent and strategic site within the Square, policy emphasises maximising the potential of such sites for economic activity, housing and regeneration. The proposed use does not represent an optimal reuse of this building.
11. The Abbeyfeale Town Centre First Plan notes that the building has been repurposed for temporary residential use. The Plan promotes reuse of buildings for housing, enterprise, retail and mixed-use development that supports town centre vitality. The proposed permanent conversion to hostel accommodation represents a clear departure from this approach.
12. The proposal appears to pre-empt a coordinated approach to the redevelopment of a key town centre site. No evidence has been provided that alternative uses such as residential, mixed-use, retail, enterprise or community uses have been adequately considered.
13. The application lacks detail regarding management, supervision and operational controls, making it difficult to fully assess the potential impacts of the development.
14. The Town Centre First Plan identifies the Square as a key focus for regeneration and public realm enhancement, with objectives to deliver a high-quality and dynamic destination supporting commercial activity, events and markets. The proposed hostel use is inward-looking and does not provide an active frontage or contribute to the animation of the Square.
15. The provision and operation of tourist accommodation in Ireland is typically delivered by the private sector or by independent non-profit operators, with the role of the planning authority being to facilitate such development through land-use zoning, infrastructure provision and policy support. While there is no prohibition on a local authority bringing forward such development, the proposed use represents a departure from the established delivery model for tourism accommodation. In this context, it is reasonable to expect a clear and robust planning justification for the proposed development, as outlined in this development.

Mayor's Response:

The contents of the submission have been considered and responses to the key points are summarised below:

1. The site is zoned Town Centre in the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029, the objective and purpose of this zoning is to consolidate Abbeyfeale's Town Centre through densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses and urban streets, while delivering a high-quality urban environment, which will enhance the quality of life of residents, visitors

and workers alike. The hostel use is generally permitted and acceptable in principle, accordingly the proposal does not materially contravene the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028 or the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029.

2. The Town Centre Strategy and associated zoning supports a variety of uses and promotes a mix of uses, to support a vibrant Town Centre, furthermore, the Plan recognises the need for versatility and the requirement for diversification of uses in Town Centres, to support greater vitality of town. The Town Centre First Policy, promotes revitalisation of Town Centre's, creating sustainable place for people to live, work and visit and this proposal seeks to capitalise on the location of the proposed development, in proximity to the Limerick Greenway, to promote economic activity in the Town Centre and provide an alternative tourism accommodation offering, in West Limerick. The Town Centre First Strategy recognizes a mix of uses is required to deliver sustainable Town Centres and the need to diversify from traditional uses, accordingly, it is considered that the proposed use, supports the Town Centre First Strategy and the growth of the town.
3. The Core Strategy of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (as varied) and Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029, sets out sufficient zoned lands to cater for the projected growth for Abbeyfeale within the lifetimes of these Plans, accordingly, the redevelopment of this vacant building does not impact on the delivery of the housing development in the town.
4. The proposed development supports economic activity in the Town Centre; the zoning supports the proposed use and accordingly is not contrary to the Retail Strategy.
5. The proposed development supports economic development, provides alternative tourist accommodation offering in Abbeyfeale and will also support other businesses in the town, by attracting tourists to dwell in Abbeyfeale. The location of the proposed development on a strategic National Route, connecting Dublin and Kerry and in proximity to the Limerick Greenway, provides the optimum location for a tourist hostel. It is considered that the proposed development seeks to support the growth and development of Abbeyfeale.
6. The Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029 sets out sufficient zoned lands to cater for the sustainable growth of Abbeyfeale. The reuse of a vacant former commercial building will not impact on the overall delivery of housing and will promote the growth of the town.
7. Given the nature and location of the proposed development in proximity to the Limerick Greenway and on numerous bus routes, it is envisaged that many of the hostel users would utilise sustainable means of transport to the facility. In addition, there is sufficient car parking and bus set down in the Town Centre to cater for the proposed development.

8. The proposed tourist accommodation offering will be managed to minimise any impact on residential amenities, from patrons using the proposed facility, the location of the proposed development in the Town Centre, where a variety of commercial and residential uses are located and co – exist, similar to any other urban centre.
9. The proposed development is compatible with the zoning of the lands in the Town Centre; the site is in proximity to the Limerick Greenway, complements the existing tourism offering in Abbeyfeale and aligns with policies of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028 to support the development of tourism opportunities in Limerick.
10. The proposed use supports economic activity in the Town Centre and will attract tourism users to the Town Centre, will support other businesses, and provide an additional economic boost for the Town Centre.
11. The Town Centre First Plan for Abbeyfeale promotes the revitalisation of the Town Centre, supporting a mix of uses, which compliments the existing uses in The Square. It is considered that the proposed development, reusing a currently vacant property, will support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. The proposed development will promote tourism in West Limerick and compliment alternative tourism accommodation providers in the area, such as hotels, B&B's, glamping pods etc.
12. Limerick City and County Council carried out a feasibility study, which explored several options for the redevelopment of the site, and concluded that the proposed use was the optimum use, taking all factors into account and supporting economic activity in the Town Centre.
13. Management and operation of the hostel have been considered and incorporated into the design of the building.
14. It is considered that the proposed use is compatible with the premise of the Town Centre First Plan, will support economic development and seeks to promote the revitalisation of Town Centre.
15. Limerick City and County Council are seeking to promote economic activity in Abbeyfeale, aligning with the principles of the Town Centre First Plan, which seeks to revitalise the Town Centre, reusing of a vacant building, capitalising on its location, in proximity to the Limerick Greenway, to promote the vitality of the Town Centre. Limerick City and County Council are a dynamic Local Authority, who are play a proactive role in supporting economic activity, across many means and will continue to work with local stakeholders to grow economic activity across Limerick.

Submission from Statutory Bodies:

SUB (1): Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Submission Summary:

Submission received from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, outlines that a bat survey shall be undertaken to determine the use of the buildings at the property by bats due to the large access points on the buildings. If bats are found to be present a Bat Derogation licence shall be applied for prior to works commencing. Mitigation measures required for the provision of bats prior to, during and post construction are to be implemented with the intention of enhancing roosting with the provision of bat boxes. To ensure that the impact on bats utilising the area is reduced by the development, bat friendly lighting shall be used during and post construction and on all lighting of the completed structure and carpark/public areas.

Mayor's Response:

An ecological survey was carried out as part of the EIA Screening which showed "no presence of hibernating bats or evidence of former bat activity". A pre-works bat survey will be carried out prior to any activity commencing on site. Any proposals in relation to lighting will be informed by the pre-works survey.

4.0 Habitats Directive Project Screening Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been undertaken by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd for the proposed development. The screening examined the impacts the proposed development may have on European Designated Sites including the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code 002165 and Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (004161). The report concludes that the proposed development is not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site given the nature of the proposed works.

The concluding commentary states:

- The proposed development has been screened to assess its potential impacts on the Natura 2000 network. The assessment concludes that the redevelopment will not give rise to likely significant effects on any designated European sites and, as such, an Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- There is no direct Source Pathway Receptor link to the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165) and there is no meaningful pathway between the former bank site and the River Feale. A vegetation buffer of approximately 15m further reduces the potential for runoff, ensuring that water quality will not be impacted.
- The existing drainage infrastructure will remain largely unchanged, and adequate capacity exists within the local wastewater treatment plant. Consequently, no significant effects are anticipated in relation to water quality, air quality, disturbance to species, or the spread of invasive species. No high-impact invasive species are present on site, and all waste will be managed at licensed facilities.
- Based on the findings of the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening, it is concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required. This determination is supported by objective scientific information in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended. The development, either alone or in combination with other projects, is not expected to have a significant effect on any European site.
- Overall, the screening confirms that the development poses no significant risk to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. Therefore, the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement is not necessary. It can be objectively concluded that no

significant effects will arise in relation to the Lower River Shannon SAC or any other Natura 2000 site in Ireland.

The LCCC Heritage Officer has reviewed the screening (Report dated 20/05/26) and accepts the screening conclusion. Therefore, having regard to the above, the scale of the development and the distance of the development from any SAC and SPA, the development as proposed should not exercise a significant effect on the conservation status of any SAC or SPA either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore a Stage 2 NIS is not necessary.

5.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

An EIA Screening Report has been prepared by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd and submitted with the application which considered whether an EIA is required for the proposed development. The submitted EIA Screening Report concludes that there is no real likelihood of significant effects of the environment having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development. The characteristics and sensitivities of the site and receiving environment are not considered vulnerable to significant adverse effects from the project with the appropriate best practice standards and procedures being implemented throughout the project.

The development is not listed in Schedule 5 Part 1 and does not meet or exceed sub-threshold requirements in Schedule 5 Part 2 as specified in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The LCCC Heritage Officer (20/05/26) has reviewed the screening report and accepts the screening conclusion. Having regard to the size of the development, located within a modified environment, it is considered that the development as proposed does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

6.0 Key Policy Provisions

Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028:

Abbeyfeale is identified as a Level 3 Towns (>1,400 population) in Table 2.4 Limerick Settlement Hierarchy.

The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the following policies and objectives with respect to acceptable development at the location in question:

Policies and Objectives

Objective CGR O13 Level 3: Towns

It is an objective of the Council to monitor and review existing Local Area Plans and prepare new Local Area Plans for the following settlements: Abbeyfeale, Caherconlish, Castleconnell, Kilmallock and Rathkeale to align with the Limerick Development Plan on completion and to consolidate the growth of these towns and focus policy on ensuring these towns become more self-sufficient, in terms of job creation and services

Policy ECON P7 Tourism

It is a policy of the Council to:

- a) Promote and facilitate the growth of the tourism industry in Limerick and tourism employment opportunities, through the sustainable development of urban and rural visitor attractions, amenities, facilities, festivals and events.
- b) Support the Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023, the Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, the River Shannon Tourism Masterplan and the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, which inform the development of tourism in Limerick.

Objective ECON O45 Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Support strong growth in the tourism sector in Limerick ensuring the economic and societal benefits of tourism are effectively distributed throughout the County, through connections between complementary sites and attractions, by encouraging visitors to move around the County and to enable them to do so with ease.
- b) Support the development of Limerick's capacity for largescale group tourism, through improved transport amenities for bus tours, group tours and cruise ship visitors.
- c) Recognise the heritage value of Limerick's towns and villages such as Adare, Kilmallock and Askeaton and seek opportunities to enhance their tourism potential.
- d) Support and harness the tourism potential of existing rural and heritage site amenities/attractions, including The Clare Glens, Lough Gur, Knockfierna, Munster Vales, Ballyhoura Country, Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, The Shannon Estuary Way, Curragh Chase, Fullers Folly and Adare Heritage Centre, in a way that promotes sustainable tourism.
- e) Actively develop Limerick as an Events location with the appropriate infrastructure to attract international conferences, sporting, cultural and commercial events, including the development of an International Conference Centre and improved public realm, which supports outdoor performance and events of scale (Refer to Chapter 3: Spatial Strategy Section 3.4.5.1).
- f) To adopt a strategic collaborative approach to the delivery of the Ryder Cup in Adare/Limerick in 2027 to leverage the legacy potential of this major event and ensure maximum return on investment for Limerick and the region.
- g) To work with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to develop the water activity sector in Limerick by exploring the potential for increased accessibility to Limerick's waterways for water-based tourism activity (refer also to Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure and Chapter 11: Development Management Standards).
- h) Support and promote the development of the Shannon River Interpretative Centre in Limerick City.

Objective ECON O51 Clustering of Tourist Facilities

It is an objective of the Council to cluster niche tourist/ visitor services and infrastructure, including locations where the service or tourist attraction currently exists.

Objective ECON O52 Location of Tourism Accommodation

It is an objective of the Council to: a) Ensure that holiday accommodation including campsite (i.e., static and touring caravans, campervans, glamping pods and tents) developments should be concentrated within or adjoining existing towns, villages and settlements, where they can best support the provision of services and minimise the impact on the open landscape. Such developments should respect the existing fabric of

the settlement, both in scale and design. In limited cases, such accommodation may be appropriate in rural locations, where it compliments an existing tourism asset/ service and where there is a justifiable need, such as its proximity to established tourism trails/ routes/ food and craft businesses. In rural locations, structures should be integrated into the existing landscape or proposals should demonstrate that an appropriate landscape will be designed around the structure. b) Proposals to reinstate, conserve and/ or renovate existing, vacant, derelict or disused buildings for holiday accommodation in both urban and rural areas, will be considered subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

Objective HO O4 Re-use of Existing Buildings

It is an objective of the Council to encourage redevelopment and reuse, including energy retrofitting, of existing housing stock and conversion of other suitable buildings to sustainable housing accommodation.

Policy CS P2 Compact Growth

It is a policy of the Council to support the compact growth of Limerick City Metropolitan Area, towns and villages by prioritising housing and employment development in locations within and contiguous to existing City and town footprints where it can be served by public transport and walking and cycling networks, to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, density and sequence, in line with the Core Strategy Table 2.7.

Objective PF O1 Physical Framework Strategy

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Build a strong competitive economy.
- b) Promote healthy communities.
- c) Require good design.
- d) Promote sustainable movement.
- e) Deliver a wide choice of high-quality homes.
- f) Support high quality communications infrastructure.
- g) Meet the challenge of climate change and flooding.
- h) Conserve and enhance the natural and historic environments.

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Policy CGR P1 Compact Growth and Revitalisation

It is a policy of the Council to achieve sustainable intensification and consolidation, in accordance with the Core Strategy, through an emphasis on revitalisation and the delivery of more compact and consolidated growth, integrating land use and transport, with the use of higher densities and mixed-use developments at an appropriate scale on brownfield, infill, backland, state-lands and underutilised sites within the existing built footprint of Limerick's City, Towns and Villages.

Objective HO O3 Protection of Existing Residential Amenity

It is an objective of the Council to ensure a balance between the protection of existing residential amenities, the established character of the area and the need to provide for sustainable new development.

Objective CS O2 Capacity of Town/Village to Absorb Development

It is an objective of the Council that development within towns and villages shall be considered on the basis of its connectivity to the existing town/village core, capacity (infrastructural, social, cultural and economic), good design, community gain and proper planning and sustainable development.

Objective CGR O4 Active Land Management

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Promote an active land management approach through cooperation with relevant stakeholders and infrastructure providers to deliver enabling infrastructure to achieve compact growth.
- b) Support and facilitate the reuse and revitalisation of derelict, vacant and underutilised sites and disused buildings throughout Limerick for residential, economic, community and leisure purposes

Objective CAF O4 Climate Proofing

It is an objective of the Council to ensure climate proofing measures are incorporated into the design, planning, layout and orientation and construction of all developments, including the use of sustainable materials, selection of suitable locations and the use of renewable energy sources.

Objective IN O21 Construction and Demolition

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Require construction Waste Management Plans to be submitted as part of planning applications, to address waste management on site during construction and mitigation measures to address waste generation, in accordance with the principles of the circular economy and the principles of prevention, renewal and recycle.
- b) Require a Refurbishment/Demolition Asbestos Survey (RDAS) with full details of disposal of the asbestos to be submitted with any planning application. The RDAS should be carried out in accordance with Section 8 of the Health and Safety Authority, Asbestos Guidelines (Practical Guidelines on ACM Management and Abatement) by a suitable qualified professional with expertise in asbestos disposal.

Table DM 9(b): Car and Bicycle Parking Standards – Newcastle West and other settlements

Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029 - the site is zoned 'Town Centre'.

Objective: To protect, consolidate and facilitate the development of Abbeyfeale's commercial, retail, educational, leisure, residential, social and community uses and facilities.

Purpose: To consolidate Abbeyfeale's Town Centre through densification of appropriate commercial and residential developments ensuring a mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, residential uses and urban streets, while delivering

a high-quality urban environment, which will enhance the quality of life of residents, visitors and workers alike. This zone will strengthen retail provision, in accordance with Retail Strategy for Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick 2022 –2028, emphasise urban conservation, ensure priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, while minimising the impact of private car-based traffic and enhancing the existing urban fabric.

Policies and Objectives

Policy ED 1 Strategic Economic Development

It is policy of the Council to: Promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generating activities in Abbeyfeale on appropriately zoned lands, in a sustainable manner, in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Policy TCF P1 Town Centre

It is policy of the Council to:

- a) Support the implementation of the Town Centre First Plan for Abbeyfeale, in collaboration with the local community and the Town Team, in accordance with the Town Centre First Programme, aligned to the commitments of the Programme for Government, national policies and higher-level spatial plans.
- b) Capitalise on the infrastructural investments in the town that support the Town Centre First programme within the lifetime of this Plan and seek further opportunities to promote Abbeyfeale as a viable, vibrant and attractive town centre to live, work and visit fulfilling its roles as the service, social, cultural, economic and recreational hub for the local community and hinterland sensitive to the town's rich architectural heritage and improved public realm.
- c) Promote high quality place-making and public realm, in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, including the Development Management Standards, any replacement thereof and any relevant Section 28 Guidance. All development shall demonstrate climate resilience measures to climate-proof critical infrastructure.
- d) Ensure developments are sensitive to the town's rich architectural heritage and apply the highest quality of public realm and urban design principles are applied in the town centre, and the opportunity areas identified in this Plan.
- e) Ensure development proposals give proper consideration to the urban design criteria of site context, built heritage, climate resilience, connectivity, inclusivity, variety, efficiency, distinctiveness, layout, public realm, adaptability, privacy and amenity, parking and detailed design.

Objective ED 02 Tourism Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Support growth in the tourism sector in Abbeyfeale by facilitating vital connections between complementary sites, attractions and town centre, and ensuring visitors can easily avail of services in Abbeyfeale town centre.
- b) Support the provision of a range of tourist accommodation types and infrastructure including, hostel accommodation, campervan/caravans sites, subject to them being located on suitably zoned lands.
- c) Support Abbeyfeale's role in the Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019 - 2023 and any subsequent replacement document.

- d) Require tourism projects to adhere to appropriate environmental and ecological assessment and to mitigate any adverse environmental, biodiversity and ecological impacts.
- e) Support community engagement in the development of tourism and amenity projects in the town.
- f) Seek to improve public realm opportunities, to make available spaces to facilitate the tradition of festivals in the town.
- g) Support development of the Limerick Greenway, ancillary facilities, connectivity between the Greenway and the town centre, Abbeyfeale as a Greenway hub, with enhanced accessibility to the heritage and cultural assets of the town.

Policy DS 2 Development Strategy

It is policy of the Council to: Deliver new residential development, in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, supporting a choice of quality housing, mixed tenure and unit size/type designed for ease of adaption to the lifecycle and universally accessible.

7.0 Appraisal

Principle of Development:

This Part 8 applicant is for the change of use of the existing disused bank to a hostel, at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, on appropriately zoned lands in the ownership of Limerick City and County Council. The land use zoning in place is Town Centre and use as a hostel is permitted in principle. In this regard, the Council seeks to promote sustainable development and support the growth of the local economy through the provision of appropriate visitor accommodation within an established town centre location.

The proposal aligns with Objective ECON O45 (Tourism), which supports the expansion of the tourism sector across Limerick, including the enhancement of towns and villages as visitor destinations and encouraging connectivity between attractions. The development of a hostel in Abbeyfeale will contribute to the town's tourism infrastructure, facilitating increased visitor numbers and supporting the wider tourism network, including regional attractions and routes.

The proposal is further consistent with Objective ECON O51, which promotes the clustering of tourist facilities within existing settlements, thereby strengthening the role of Abbeyfeale as a service and tourism hub. In addition, the development accords with Objective ECON O52 which supports the provision of tourism accommodation within towns and villages and encourages the reuse and renovation of vacant or disused buildings for such purposes. Furthermore, the proposal is in line with Objective HO O4 (Re-use of Existing Buildings), which encourages the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing building stock, including the conversion of suitable structures to sustainable accommodation uses. The reuse of this prominent vacant building represents an efficient use of serviced land and contributes positively to the vitality of the town centre.

Having regard to the relevant policy context, including the promotion of tourism development and the sustainable reuse of existing structures, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

Design & Layout:

The proposed development consists of a change of use of a former bank building to a hostel. The existing three-storey building, located on a 0.0914 hectare site, will be reconfigured to provide bedroom accommodation and associated sanitary facilities on the first and second floors, with communal self-catering facilities at ground floor level. Internal alterations include the reconfiguration of layouts to accommodate new sanitary facilities, communal kitchen and dining areas, and ancillary spaces. Modifications will also provide a side access leading to secure bicycle storage and bin storage areas.

At ground floor level, the development will include a communal food preparation and dining area, laundry room, office space, one accessible bedroom, a bicycle store with lockers, and a bin store. These facilities will be accessed via secure doors along the side of the building. The first floor will contain four dormitory style bedrooms, along with shared shower and toilet facilities. The second floor will similarly provide four dormitory rooms, in addition to shared shower and toilet facilities. The development will also connect to all existing services.

Materials and Finishes:

External works include the replacement of the existing shopfront glazing (while retaining the surrounding mosaic tiles), the installation of a metal-framed glazed canopy over the first-floor terrace, and the addition of photovoltaic panels on the rear south-facing roof slope. Further details are provided in the Architectural Design Statement and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) submitted as part of the proposal. These documents were reviewed by the LCCC Architectural Conservation Officer (08/05/26), and engagement took place with the Design Team during the design development process. The building was identified as being of architectural interest as a circa 1970 commercial bank, reflecting a typology and design comparable to other Bank of Ireland premises constructed in that period nationwide. As such, it illustrates the continued evolution of Abbeyfeale as a commercial centre and makes a meaningful contribution to the character of the Abbeyfeale Architectural Conservation Area.

Following consultation, revisions were made to the front elevation, with particular attention given to the shopfront design. The final submitted proposal retains the architectural character of the original 1970s bank building and is considered to have a positive impact on the character of the Architectural Conservation Area as a whole. Overall, the proposed materials and finishes are considered visually acceptable.

Bin Storage:

Secure external bin storage is proposed to the rear of the property with side gate access. This is considered appropriate.

Vehicle and Bicycle Parking:

As set out in Table DM 9(b) of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, the maximum car parking permitted is 1 car parking space for every ten beds. No parking is proposed as part of the development as ample on-street car parking exists to the front of the building in The Square. Having regard to the above, car parking provision for the proposed development is considered to comply with the requirements set out in the Limerick Development Plan.

As set out in Table DM 9(b) 1 bicycle parking space per 10 beds and 1 bike space per 5 staff is required. No detail has been provided on the exact number of bicycle parking spaces for visitors and staff, however, there is ample room to retrofit a part of the amenity area to provide any additional spaces as necessary.

Boundary And Landscaping Detail:

The rear boundary of the existing building will consist of a new 1.2m high timber post and rail fence with wire mesh infill and secure gate that will access the river side. Having regard to the above, the landscaping scheme as presented is acceptable.

Surface Water Disposal:

The proposed reuse of the existing building is located within an established urban area where a surface water connection is already in place. Given the presence of this existing infrastructure, it is intended to retain and utilise the current surface water outfall as part of the redevelopment. Any works will be limited and will ensure that runoff rates and volumes are managed in accordance with best practice and local authority requirements, with opportunities for minor on-site attenuation or SuDS measures incorporated where feasible.

Services:

The proposed development has existing public foul, water and surface water connections in place.

Invasive species:

There are no noted invasive species on site.

Architecture/Archaeology:

The site is not within the vicinity of a recorded monument. The site is in the Abbeyfeale Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). An AHIA has been submitted as part of the application and reviewed to the satisfaction of the Architectural Conservation Officer.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP):

The Outline CEMP was prepared by LCCC and details the approach to the demolition and construction waste that will result from this scheme. The CEMP states that the Contractor will comply with all relevant waste management legislation, including the Waste Management Act 1996 (as amended), the Protection of the Environment Act 2003, the Litter Pollution Act 1997, and the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 126 of 2011). In addition, the Contractor will have regard to national policy and guidance documents such as A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020–2025) and the EPA's Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects, ensuring that all waste arising from the project is managed in accordance with best practice and statutory requirements. Having regard to the above, the Outline CEMP as presented is acceptable.

Bat Survey:

The survey was carried out within the appropriate timeframe for bat surveys, i.e. on the 13th and 14th of April, 2026 and has been reviewed by the LCCC Heritage Officer (20/05/26). The survey is viewed as comprehensive, involving site inspections, emergence surveys, and the use of thermal cameras, handheld detectors, and static detectors placed within the building, all of which add weight to the survey conclusions. It is acknowledged that a later survey would have been beneficial to establish potential maternity roost usage. Seasonal usage can vary, and bats have been known to occupy previously unsuitable sites during prolonged warm periods, such as the summer of 2018, when increased temperature and dryness improve conditions. The presence of starlings in the building is noted, and works should be scheduled outside the bird nesting season to avoid disturbance. This timing would also provide protection to bats during their most active period and the following are recommended actions during construction or the carrying out of works.

- To avoid disturbance to nesting birds, works on the roof should be scheduled outside the breeding bird season (September 1st to January 31st).
- Undertake mid-summer surveys to establish whether the existing stone building is used as a maternity roost.
- Ensure any new courtyard lighting is fitted with directional cowls to minimise light spill and reduce impacts on bat activity.

These measures will be incorporated into any construction works on site.

Flooding

The proposed site is not located within a Flood Zone.

8.0 Conclusion:

In conclusion, the proposed development is consistent with the zoning objectives of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023–2029 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028, supporting the town’s vision for compact growth. The project makes efficient use of zoned urban land through the reuse of an existing vacant property, helping to meet the evolving needs of the local community, particularly in the area of tourism. Furthermore, it aligns with Limerick’s broader goals of creating vibrant and liveable town centres in line with long-term growth strategies. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with both the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2023–2029 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022–2028 and represents proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Having regard to the foregoing evaluation and the reasons and considerations as set out, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the objectives of the Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan, 2023-2029 and the Limerick Development Plan, 2022 - 2028 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Pursuant to Section 179(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) it is recommended that the proposed development should be proceeded with as proposed.



Mr. John Moran

Mayor

Limerick City & County Council

Date: 30 June 2026.

APPENDIX 1 INTERNAL REPORTS

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION SECTION

Part 8 - 26/8365 - Planning Referral - Conservation



O'Keeffe, Shona
To McNulty, Jennifer; plandev

You replied to this message on 02/06/2026 12:58.

Reply Reply All Forward

Fri 08/05/2026 10:10

Hi Jennifer,

Please see below comments on this application.

The Design Team engaged with me as Architectural Conservation Officer during the design development for this project. I noted that the building was of architectural interest as a c. 1970 commercial bank building, of a similar typology and design to other Bank of Ireland premises constructed during this period around the country. The building is therefore considered to illustrate the continued evolution and development of Abbeyfeale as a commercial centre, and to make an interesting contribution to the character of the Abbeyfeale Architectural Conservation Area. Following our discussion, revisions were made to the front elevation, with particular focus on the shopfront. I am of the opinion that the finalised design, as submitted for the Part 8, retains the architectural character of the original 1970s bank, and will have a positive impact on the character of the A.C.A.

Shóna O'Keeffe
Executive Architectural Conservation Officer | Forward Planning, Urban Development and Heritage | Planning, Heritage and Ryder Cup Directorate
Limerick City & County Council
Merchants Quay | Limerick V94 EH90
061 556 051
www.limerick.ie | @LimerickCouncil | #LimerickEdgeEmbrace

FIRE AUTHORITY

PT8LL365 File No FIRE Murtagh Crawford



Crawford, Murtagh

To Planning Referrals

Cc fireservice; McNulty, Jennifer

Follow up. Start by Tuesday 28 April 2026. Due by Tuesday 28 April 2026.



24/04/2026

Fire & Building Control have no objections in principle with the proposed development ref **PT8LL365** as per the following:

- A Fire Safety Certificate, and a Disability Access Certificate, applications shall be required for the proposed works.
- The works shall be designed and constructed in accordance with Building Regulations 1997-2024.
- The Building Control Regulations 1997-2024 apply to all applicable works.

Regards

Murtagh Crawford

Assistant Chief Fire Officer | Fire & Emergency Services

Regional Services Directorate

Limerick City & County Council

Lissanalta House, Dooradoyle,

Co. Limerick, V94 3W44

T: 061-556265

E: murtagh.crawford@limerick.ie



Planning Application Internal Report

Planning Ref: Maiden Street Bat Report April 2026.

Applicant: LCCC

Development Description: Part 8 Redevelopment of existing buildings.

Report Prepared By: T O Neill Heritage Officer.

Comments: the survey was carried out within the appropriate time frame for bat surveys i.e on the 13th and 14th of April. It was comprehensive in that it involved site inspections, emergence surveys and the use of thermal cameras, handheld detectors and static detectors placed in the building all of which add weight to the survey consultations. It's a pity, it could not have been done later to establish potential maternity roost usage, but it would have been constrained by the Part 8 Time frame. I would agree with the late survey to establish maternity roosts or summer roost usage. This can vary as I have seen bats occupy sites that were previously unsuitable during the long warm summer of 2018. The additional warmth and dryness had rendered previously suboptimal sites much more useful from a bats perspective. I would also agree with the recommendation re light cowls to minimise light spill and lighting effects. While some species such as Pipistrelles and Leislers, in my experience, are more tolerant of lighting than others any techniques to reduce the effects of lighting would be welcomed to reduce its overall effects on bat activity.

The presence of starlings in the building is noted, and I would agree with the recommendation to carry out works only outside the bird nesting season to avoid disturbing them. It would also confer protection to bats during their time of most intensive activity.

While you mention conditions, so far as I know it is not possible to place conditions on Part 8s, but it may be possible to suggest recommended actions such as those put forward in the bat report. This is what I would suggest.

Recommendation:

Recommend Part 8 approval for this development with the following recommended actions:

Suggested Actions:

1 To avoid disturbance to nesting birds, works on the roof must be scheduled outside the breeding bird season, from September 1st to January 31st.

2 Recommend mid- summer surveys to examine if the old stone building is being used as a maternity roost.

3 Any new courtyard lights to be installed with directional cowls to prevent light spill, to minimise effects of any new lighting.

Reason; *to minimise chances of disturbance to onsite birds and bats.*

Signed

T O Neill

Date: 20/05/2026

Limerick City & County Council

Re: Part 8 Proposal for the following:

Part 8 proposal - Reference PT8LL365 – The development will consist of the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services. The proposal has undergone Appropriate Assessment Screening in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and screening for Environmental Impact Assessment under the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Determination

Pursuant to the requirements of the above Limerick City & County Council is proposing, at

The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services.

The plans and particulars were placed on public display from the 19th March, 2026 up to and including 20th April, 2026, and submissions and observations were invited up to the 6th of June, 2026 in accordance with the requirements of Part XI of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

Having regard to EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the EIA Directive), the guidance contained in the Department of Housing Planning Community and Local Government's "Impact Assessment Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development" (2003), Screening of the development for Environmental Impact was carried out by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd on behalf of the Community Sport and Rural Development Directorate of Limerick City and County Council.

The Screening has been carried out in accordance with the EIA Directive and to Annex I, II and III of that Directive, which sets out requirements for mandatory and sub-threshold EIA. The proposal has been assessed in accordance with the criteria for sub-threshold development to determine the potential impact on the environment of the project.

The subsequent EIA Screening Report concludes that the development has been assessed under the environmental criteria outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and a sub-threshold EIAR is not required as the proposal is substantially

below relevant mandatory EIA thresholds (all works are to be carried out entirely within existing built footprint of the building). The proposed development will not have any significant impacts on the environment given the size of the site and the scale of development. All recommended mitigation measures and standard practices will be employed throughout the construction phase of the development to ensure that the proposed development will not create any significant impacts on the quality of the surrounding environment.

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the proposal will not present a risk to the environment. As such this screening exercise concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required for this project.

Order: That Limerick City & County Council as the Competent Authority having considered the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report prepared by Ross Swift Ecology Ltd makes a determination that, makes a determination that an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required to inform the proposal for the development which will consist of the change of use of the bank at ground floor and the residential unit at first and second floors to a hostel; internal reconfiguration to accommodate sanitary and self-catering facilities; internal reconfiguration to provide a side access to secure bicycle and bin storage areas; replacement of shopfront glazing with retention of surrounding mosaic tiles; installation of a metal-framed glazed roof canopy to the first floor terrace; installation of photovoltaic panels to the rear south-facing roof; and connection to all existing services at The Square, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick.



Dr. Pat Daly

Director General

Limerick City & County Council

Date: 12/6/2026