

# **Westmeath County Council**

## **Part 8 Planning Report**



**WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**Local Authority Development**

## **Extension to Athlone Fire Station**

**File Ref. LA(A) 2017-03**

**Planning Report in Accordance with Section 179 of the Planning and  
Development Act 2000-2014 and Part 8 of the Planning and Development  
Regulations**

### **1. Site/Location;**

The application site comprises of Athlone Fire Station that fronts the Coosan Point Road at Beechpark West. The station is a two-storey building with a series subordinates, hipped roofing and brick finish accommodating fire engines and ancillary equipment in addition to offices and associated facilities. There is a large yard to the rear and a training tower plus storage building.

### **2. Description of nature and extent of the proposed development;**

The proposed extension is primarily to extend the parking bays in the fire station to the rear of the building. The proposed rear extension shall mirror the existing and present 4 large roller doors.

#### **Existing rear elevation:**



### **3. Observations/Submissions;**

1. Beechpark Residents Association, 14 Beechpark West – received 04/08/2017.
2. Eileen Fitzgerald & Family, 43 Beechpark West – received 05/09/2019.

A synopsis of the submissions and response to same are detailed as follows:

#### **Beechpark Residents Association**

1. The Site Notice is incorrect; development address should read Beechpark West, not Beechpark and as such renders the application invalid.

2. The Site notices were not legible and not in the correct locations.
3. There is no clarification as to the type of vehicles to be housed in the proposed extension and an article in the Advertiser (newspaper) suggests that the nature of the extension will require equipment for larger and taller buildings.
4. The article in the newspaper, the Advertiser, quoted that the CFO stated that the Fire station is surrounded by high walls and the extension will not be intrusive. It is submitted that this is not the case and training activities including the use of an ALP (Aerial Ladder Platform) is noisy and intrusive by ways of overlooking private gardens.
5. There is a history of complaints/correspondence between residents and a Councillor/Chief Fire Officer/Town Clerk since c. 1998 regarding problems of smoke/fumes during training exercises without a satisfactory resolution.
6. The firemen are well equipped with breathing apparatus and protective clothing whereas residents in the immediate vicinity of the site are not and have no protection to combat smoke inhalation.
7. Residents seek assurances that training days won't be increased and notes that the Part 8 process gives no recourse for people to appeal rather than judicial review.
8. Concludes that the residents have no problem with where the Fire Station is located, but feel that the training area and associated activities is not suitable within a residential area.

***Response:***

1. It is considered that the location of the Athlone Fire Station is widely recognisable and accepted as per the details on the Part 8 submission.
2. The legibility of the site notices were deemed acceptable at the time of site inspection
3. The extension is to accommodate existing fire appliances that are currently housed in cramped conditions.
- 4 -8 This Part 8 relates solely to the extension of the building to improve the parking arrangement of existing fire appliances. The development works are not associated with training activities nor will it facilitate any additional training operations/activity on site.

**Eileen Fitzgerald & Family**

1. The drawings of the proposed work appear to indicate the overall expansion of the fire station adding several new rooms i.e. sitting room, foyer, male and female changing etc and there is no clarification as to what type of vehicles are to be housed.
2. Seeks clarification on the impact that the proposed expansion of training facilities will have on residents in the immediate vicinity.
3. Outlines ongoing disturbance such as 'thick black smoke and toxic fumes' as well as noise and overlooking from training activities on site including failed measures to address same (copies of correspondence from a local Elected Representative

and Fire Personnel). Questions if this type of activity going to increase with the proposed new fire station.

4. The training tower has become a boarded up eye sore and will affect the valuation of adjacent properties.
5. Propose that WCC and Athlone Fire Station relocate fire drills/training to place outside of the urban area of the town centre in the interests of the health and safety of the surrounding residents. Mullingar fire station training facilities is sensibly located in an industrial estate away from residents.

***Response:***

1. The proposed works provide for improved parking arrangements only by lengthening of the parking bays. The personnel rooms referred to are detailed in the existing floor plans; there are no proposals to extend same. The vehicles to be housed comprise of the existing fire service fleet.
- 2- 5. This Part 8 relates solely to the extension of the building to improve the parking arrangement of existing fire appliances. The development works are not associated with training activities nor will it facilitate any additional training operations/activity on site.

**4. Referrals**

The application was advertised locally in the Westmeath Independent on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and also by displaying a site notice on site.

Referrals were also made to the following:

- Department Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- An Taisce
- Irish Water
- Water Services
- District Engineer - Athlone Municipal District

A response was received from the District Engineer recommending conditions.

**District Engineer - Athlone Municipal District – report dated 03/07/2017:**

- Foul water and surface water shall be disposed on a separate system basis. Combining of the foul and storm water is prohibited. All uncontaminated surface water, including roof water from proposed extension, shall be separately collected and discharged to the public storm drainage network and shall not in circumstances be allowed discharge to the foul network.
- During the construction phase of the proposed extension, the site access road shall be kept clean so that no mud or debris is allowed onto the public road.

5. **Planning History;**  
None recent.  
Fire Station is operational since 1984 at this location.

6. **Policies/Objectives;**

➤ **Athlone Town Development Plan 2014**

**Landuse zoning: Community, Educational, Institutional**

**O-LZ9** To provide for, protect and improve educational and institutional facilities such as churches, schools, libraries, museums, health-centres, **fire stations**, graveyards, arts and entertainment facilities. To preserve the open character of institutional lands and the setting of heritage buildings contained within institutional lands.

7. **Need**

The need for the development arises from the necessity to increase the length of the appliance bays to allow two trucks comfortably park, front to rear, and ready for dispatch. The proposal would improve operational efficiency, particularly in case of emergencies to allow fire personal move around the station and dispatch emergency response vehicles promptly. The current parking bays are restricted in length; consequently a number of vehicles have to be stored in a separate shed to the rear.

**Existing confined parking:**





## 8. Issues

The primary issues to determine relate to residential amenity/ operational activity and visual impact.

### **Residential amenity/operational activity**

The proposed development relates solely to the lengthening of the fire appliance parking bays in the existing station and does not provide for intensification of operational activity on site. The works are required to provide a more efficient and safer parking and dispatch arrangement of Fire Service Vehicles. While the concerns raised by residents are noted, it is considered that the operational activity is a separate matter to the consideration of this Part 8. However, I will refer both submissions to the Chief Fire Officer and ask that he address the operational issues therein and revert directly to those who made these submissions.

### **Visual impact**

The proposed extension is to the rear of the existing fire station; extending 6.5metres from the rear building line overlooking the rear yard. The rear elevation shall mirror the existing, with large roller doors separated by brick piers. Given the low sloping pitch of the roof, the roofing material shall comprise of insulated roofing panels.

It is considered that the visual impact of the proposed extension works will be minimal and the building works can successfully assimilate into the site.

## 9. Evaluation of consistency with the proper planning and development of the area having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan.

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the Athlone Town Plan 2014 - 2020 having regard to the policy and objectives as outlined above.

## 10. Recommendation

It is considered that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 and therefore accords with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and subject to the following:

- Details of external materials and finishing shall be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development works.
- Foul water and surface water shall be disposed on a separate system basis. Combining of the foul and storm water is prohibited. All uncontaminated surface water, including roof water from proposed extension, shall be separately collected and discharged to the public storm drainage network and shall not in circumstances be allowed discharge to the foul network.
- During the construction phase of the proposed extension, the site access road shall be kept clean so that no mud or debris is allowed onto the public road.

  
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Chief Executive

  
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Date

LA (A) 2017(3)

