



Planning Ref: 2461096

15 August 2024

Planning Department,
County House,
The Diamond,
Lifford,
Co. Donegal,
F93 Y622

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: 2461096 - (1) CHANGE OF USE FROM CURRENT USE OF BANK / FINANCIAL INSTITUTION AT SECTION OF GROUND FLOOR LEVEL TO A CAFÉ AND (2) CHANGE OF USE FROM BANK / FINANCIAL INSTITUTION TO A BED & BREAKFAST AT GROUND, 1ST AND 2ND FLOORS, ALONG WITH CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING SERVICES at THE FORMER BANK OF IRELAND, MAIN STREET, DUNGLOE, Co. Donegal

The Heritage Council was established in 1995 as a statutory body under the Heritage Act 1995 with a Council (the Board of the body) appointed by the Minister. The Heritage Council is a prescribed body under the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010 and S.I. No. 600/2001 of the Planning and Development Regulations, section 28 inter alia, in accordance with its functions under Section 6 of the Heritage Act, 1995. We seek to provide submissions on forward planning, development control and strategic infrastructure developments as they relate to Ireland's heritage, namely built, cultural and natural heritage.

The Heritage Council wish to support this planning application for a change of use. We are growing increasingly concerned regarding vacancy and dereliction in Irish towns and villages. This unfortunate trend has been, and continues to be, a major threat to the country's built heritage. The historic environment of Irish towns is typically characterised by a formal linear street layout, public spaces, key junctions, and streetscapes. Within this arterial streetscape individual notable buildings (often important merchant, ecclesiastical or administrative) are interspersed within the uniform building rhythm. Both residential townhouses and notable buildings such as former institutional or bank buildings are suffering neglect due to several unsustainable planning trends.

The former Bank of Ireland building is a good example, of a notable building in the streetscape, described by the NIAH as "*a strong presence in the streetscape in the centre of An Clochán Liath*". It is understood that the bank closed as part of a rationalisation of bank branches in 2021. It is unknown to us whether it has been vacant since the closure date. Regardless, when a building is not in use, and therefore not being maintained, as time progresses the attractiveness for re-use lessens. Furthermore, a lack of

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maintenance will result in damage to the historic fabric of such buildings, and potentially result in prohibitive costs for small businesses/community groups to bring back into use. Therefore, expedient re-use is also needed for such buildings.

In this case, there does not appear to be any significant external works to the property that would damage its prominent character in the streetscape. Although in time should new windows or repainting works be needed, we would encourage the installation of more original windows and a sensitive colour scheme.

For the reasons described above, the Heritage Council support the change of use, believing that conservation through use is the best method of protecting buildings which are integral to the built and cultural heritage of our towns and villages. We also recommend to Donegal County Council that any development management standards be applied flexibly to this proposal so as to not compromise strategic national and local planning policy outcomes. We believe that the proposal would comply with National Policy Outcome 16 in the National Planning Framework, and policies in the recently adopted Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030, namely RPO 3.4, and Objectives AH-O-1 and AH-O-2

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