



Planning Ref: 2560069

05 June 2025

Planning Section
Longford County Council

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: 2560069 – Proposed development to existing three storey building formerly known as The Ulster Bank which is a protected structure, RPS Ref: 449, (NIAH Ref: 13002251) AT 54 Main Street, Longford, Co. Longford.

Comment

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 management and strategic infrastructure developments as they relate to Ireland's heritage, namely built, cultural and natural heritage.

The Heritage Council support this application. Conservation through use is the most feasible approach for protecting our built heritage assets in our rural towns and villages. We are growing increasingly concerned regarding vacancy and dereliction in Irish towns, cities, and villages. This unfortunate trend has been, and continues to be, a major threat to the country's built historic environment.

Longford has a typical linear Irish townscape, which is a key feature of our national built heritage. Such townscapes are characterised by a formal linear street layout, key junctions, and streetscapes. It is then, regarding how these components are arranged, that the uniqueness of this townscape emerges. This townscape has a vertical emphasis in terms of proportions and fenestration. Within a typical streetscape individual notable buildings (often important merchant, ecclesiastical, institutional or administrative) are interspersed within the uniform building rhythm. The former Ulster Bank Building (RPS 449 in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027) is one such individual notable building. The NIAH has described it "*as a good quality and imposing mid-nineteenth century bank building, well-built and richly detailed*" with "*a commanding presence in the streetscape*".

Baill na Comhairle | Council Members

Martina Moloney (Cathaoirleach | Chairperson),
John Burgess, Damian Downes, Michael Farrell,
Fionnuala May, Deirdre McDermott, Dr. Patricia O Hare,
John G. Pierce, Sheila Pratschke, Prof. Mark Scott,
Dr. Mary Tubridy

Aras na hOidhreachta, Lana an Teampaill,
Cill Chainnigh, Eire, R95 X264

Aras na hOidhreachta, Church Lane,
Kilkenny, Ireland, R95 X264

T 056 777 0777 | **E** mail@heritagecouncil.ie

www.heritagecouncil.ie



Given this prominence, its continued re-use should be encouraged. The Heritage Council have reviewed the drawings and documentation submitted with the application. The replacement of the ground floor windows appears justified. The specialist joiner's assessment on the remaining windows is also welcomed. However, any proposals that stem from this, need to be submitted for approval by the local authority, and should identify the number of historic and non-original windows, and subsequently the corresponding repairs/treatment proposed. This should be a condition to any planning permission granted.

There is no objection to the demolition of the non-original flat roof extension to the rear. Although we do recommend that careful attention be given to the replacement signage to the front elevation. The Heritage Council also note the comments of the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government, and believe the requested information on the interior of the building would be beneficial, particularly regarding the proposed internal layout.

It is indicated in the documentation submitted with the application that the bank closed in 2023. 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 maintenance will result in damage to the historic fabric of such buildings and potentially result in prohibitive costs for businesses/community groups to bring back into use. Therefore, expedient re-use is also needed for such buildings.

Furthermore, the re-use of such regionally important historic buildings should encounter a hospitable planning environment and in this regard the Heritage Council recommend that Longford County Council apply any development management standards concerning car parking and amenity flexibly when determining this planning application. The Heritage Council also expect that the re-use of such buildings in central locations should be able to rely on adequate utility infrastructure to ensure such buildings are brought back into use. This is needed to not compromise strategic national town centre first objectives, and other local and national planning policy outcomes for compact growth.

Policy Objective CPO 11.4 of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 seeks to *Promote the maintenance and appropriate re-use of the existing building stock*. While CPO 11.9 seeks to *"Encourage the rehabilitation, renovation and reuse of existing older buildings/ buildings of architectural merit, where appropriate, in preference to their demolition and redevelopment. In certain cases, land use zoning restrictions may be relaxed in order to secure the conservation of the Protected Structure"*

Conclusion

The Heritage Council believes that the proposal complies broadly with policies in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 with compliance with Policy Objective CPO 11.4 and CPO 11.9 particularly evident. We therefore support this proposed development, with conditions.

I trust these views will inform Longford County Council's determination of the application.

Baill na Comhairle | Council Members

Martina Moloney (Cathaoirleach | Chairperson),
John Burgess, Damian Downes, Michael Farrell,
Fionnuala May, Deirdre McDermott, Dr. Patricia O Hare,
John G. Pierce, Sheila Pratschke, Prof. Mark Scott,
Dr. Mary Tubridy

Aras na hOidhreachta, Lana an Teampaill,
Cill Chainnigh, Eire, R95 X264

Aras na hOidhreachta, Church Lane,
Kilkenny, Ireland, R95 X264

T 056 777 0777 | **E** mail@heritagecouncil.ie

www.heritagecouncil.ie



Yours sincerely

Virginia Teehan

Chief Executive Officer

Baill na Comhairle | Council Members

Martina Moloney (Cathaoirleach | Chairperson),
John Burgess, Damian Downes, Michael Farrell,
Fionnuala May, Deirdre McDermott, Dr. Patricia O Hare,
John G. Pierce, Sheila Pratschke, Prof. Mark Scott,
Dr. Mary Tubridy

Charity reg. no 20036867

Aras na hOidhreachta, Lana an Teampaill,
Cill Chainnigh, Eire, R95 X264

Aras na hOidhreachta, Church Lane,
Kilkenny, Ireland, R95 X264

T 056 777 0777 | **E** mail@heritagecouncil.ie

www.heritagecouncil.ie