

Section 5 Exemption Report

Reference No.: S5.31.26

Received Date: 06/08/2026

Due Date: 03/09/2026

Applicant: Realt na Mara Hospitality Ltd.

Address: Bunk Boutique Hostel, Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway H91 T1KX.

Description of Development: The Declaration of Exempted Development Form has indicated that the proposed development involves the following:

Use of existing Bunk Boutique Hostel located in Kiltartan House in mixed use building as accommodation for international protection applicants.

The applicant has submitted a completed application form, a site location map, a planning report and a cover letter. These documents are considered adequate and are to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority for the purposes of this Section 5 referral.

Context

The subject property comprises Bunk Boutique Hostel, Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway City Centre. The premises has an established hostel use and is located within a central urban area close to public transport and city-centre amenities.

The application relates solely to the change of use of the existing hostel accommodation to accommodation for persons seeking international protection. No physical works or external alterations are proposed. The site is not within an Architectural Conservation Area and the building is not a protected structure.

Zoning

The site is zoned City Centre (CC) in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029. The objective of this zoning is “to provide for city centre activities and particularly those which preserve the city centre as the dominant commercial area for the city”. Compatible uses include retail, residential, offices, banks and professional services, tourist-related uses, cultural and community uses, education, recreation, childcare facilities and places of worship. Uses which may contribute to the zoning objective, depending on location and scale, include light industry and public utilities

Planning History

Subject site

Plan. File Ref. No. 17/239: Planning Permission **granted** to **M. McGrath** for changes and alterations. Proposed changes to consist of extension of Bunk Hostel as follows: 1) Change of use of part of existing retail unit on ground floor at front of Kiltartan House to provide extended catered dining area. 2) Provision of new fire escape hallway and external door from

main stairwell to front of Kiltartan House. 3) Provision of disabled toilet and lobby at main entrance. 4) Relocation of Hostel reception to main entrance lobby. 5) Change of use of existing retail unit on ground floor at rear of Kiltartan House to Self Catering Kitchen, dining and common room. 6) Provide seven new en-suite bedrooms at first floor. 7) Provide two new en-suite bedrooms at second floor. 8) Change of use of existing third floor office space to hostel accommodation providing an extra sixteen en-suite bedrooms, common room, and management offices at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Plan. File Ref. No. 14/95: Planning Permission **granted** to **Michael J. Fitzgerald Ltd.** for proposed new signage. New signage to include; 1) First floor level signage. 2) Vertical extension of 1 No. existing signage wall, with interchangeable lettering. 3) Permission also for the installation of a gas meter. All to be located at the junction of Park Lane and Forster Street at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Plan. File Ref. No. 13/164: Retention Permission **granted** to **Michael J. Fitzgerald Ltd.** for retention and completion of a restaurant area to ground floor with ancillary sanitary facilities to first floor (a larger restaurant use in the building had previously been granted under Pl. Ref. No. 11/250) at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Plan. Ref. No. 12/148: Retention Permission **granted** to **Michael J. Fitzgerald Ltd.** for a) retention of elevation alterations for additional windows and ground floor alterations to previously approved rear extension under planning reference 00/118 and b) change of use of existing offices to hostel comprised of four storeys providing 9 bedrooms with associated reception area, communal room, kitchen, dining room, laundry room and all associated works and to include additional signage to front and rear at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Plan. File Ref. No. 11/250: Planning Permission **granted** to **Michael J. Fitzgerald** for the (1) Change of use of commercial premises to restaurant and (2) Erection of handrail to existing terrace at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Assessment

Is or is not development

By reference to Section 3(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the proposal constitutes “development” within the meaning of the Act. Section 3 provides that “development” includes the carrying out of works on, in, over or under land and “the making of any material change in the use of any structures or other land”.

In this instance, the proposal relates to the change of use of the existing hostel accommodation at Bunk Boutique Hostel, Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway, to accommodation for protected persons. No physical works, extensions, internal alterations or external alterations are proposed as part of this Section 5 application. Accordingly, the proposal does not involve “works” within the meaning of Section 2(1) of the Act.

The subject premises has an established hostel use and the proposed use as accommodation for protected persons represents a change in the nature of the existing use. The proposal therefore constitutes development for the purposes of the Act. The matter for consideration is whether this change of use comes within the scope of exempted development under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

The subject site is not located within an Architectural Conservation Area and the building is not entered on the Record of Protected Structures. Accordingly, no issues arise in respect of protected structure status, Architectural Conservation Area designation, or works affecting the character of a protected structure.

Planning History

The planning history of the site is relevant in establishing the authorised hostel use of the subject premises. In particular, Plan. Ref. No. 12/148 granted retention permission for, inter alia, the change of use of existing offices to hostel accommodation comprising four storeys and providing 9 bedrooms, with associated reception area, communal room, kitchen, dining room, laundry room and associated works at Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway.

Plan. Ref. No. 17/239 is also of relevance, having granted permission for the extension of Bunk Hostel, including the change of use of part of the existing retail unit to provide an extended catered dining area, relocation of the hostel reception, provision of self-catering kitchen, dining and common room facilities, additional en-suite bedrooms at first and second floor levels, and the change of use of existing third floor office space to hostel accommodation.

The wider planning history also includes permissions relating to signage, restaurant use and associated alterations within Kiltartan House, including Plan. Ref. Nos. 14/95, 13/164 and 11/250. However, the most relevant permissions for the purposes of this Section 5 assessment are Plan. Ref. Nos. 12/148 and 17/239, as they confirm the established and authorised hostel use of the subject premises.

This planning history does not, in itself, confer exempted development status. Rather, it is material in confirming that the existing lawful use of the premises falls within one of the categories expressly identified under Class 14(h), namely use as a hostel.

Exempted development assessment

Class 14(h) of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, provides for the change of use of, inter alia, a hostel or other premises providing overnight accommodation to use as accommodation for protected persons.

The existing authorised use of the subject premises is hostel accommodation, as confirmed by the relevant planning history. The proposed use is accommodation for protected persons and therefore falls within the scope of Class 14(h).

No physical works are proposed, and the external appearance, footprint, height, roof profile, fenestration and access arrangements of the building will remain unchanged. The assessment is therefore confined to the change of use only.

Accordingly, while the proposal constitutes development within the meaning of Section 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, it is considered to constitute exempted development having regard to Class 14(h) of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment

Section 4(4) of the Act sets out that development shall not be exempted development if an environmental impact assessment or an appropriate assessment of the development is required. I am satisfied that having regard to the nature, scale and location of the development, the development would not give rise to any significant environmental effects and would not therefore require Environmental Impact Assessment. I am equally satisfied that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site as there is no connectivity to any nearby European sites.

Recommendation:

A letter should issue as follows:

Having regard to Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the proposal, comprising the change of use of the existing hostel accommodation at Bunk Boutique Hostel, Kiltartan House, Forster Street, Galway, to accommodation for protected persons, constitutes “development” within the meaning of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

No physical works, extensions, internal alterations or external alterations are proposed as part of the application. The proposal is therefore confined to the change of use of the existing premises.

Having regard to the established authorised hostel use of the premises, as confirmed by the relevant planning history, and to Class 14(h) of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, which provides for the change of use of, inter alia, a hostel to use as accommodation for protected persons, the proposed change of use is considered to fall within the scope of exempted development.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to constitute development, which is exempted development, and therefore does not require planning permission.

Cormac O'Hora

Cormac O'Hora
Executive Planner
10th August 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cormac O'Hora', with a stylized, cursive script.

10/08/2026