



An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Direction
BD-004715-19
ABP-305028-19

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a Board meeting held on 05/12/2019.

The Board decided by a majority of 5:3 to refuse permission, generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, for the following reasons and considerations.

Reasons and Considerations

Notwithstanding the importance of the provision of a regionally significant power generating 'peaking plant' facility at this location, arising from the increase of wind power on the national grid and the requirement to provide additional stability to the electricity supply, it is considered that the proposed development needs to be associated with and better aligned with strategic planning and renewable energy policies and plans in order to achieve balanced, orderly development of energy infrastructure. Furthermore, it is considered that the development of such energy infrastructure, to address intermittency of supply, must itself pursue the optimum potential sustainable fuel source in order that such development would not maintain or add to the current unsustainable levels of greenhouse gas emissions arising from electricity generation within the State.

Having regard to:

- The national requirements under the EU Renewables Directive 2009/28/EC relating to the share of energy from renewable sources and to the increased obligations under the recast Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001);

- The *Climate Action Plan 2019*, published by Government, which states with regard to the electricity sector, that a significant step-up in ambition over existing policy is required to achieve the level of decarbonisation required to meet Ireland's 2030 emissions reduction target and which notes the use of natural gas plants that can generate electricity at times when there is no wind, as an example of technology solutions for addressing intermittency of supply.
- The *National Planning Framework 2040*, which recognises the necessity for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system and places emphasis on the need to accelerate action on climate change, including National Policy Objective 54 (reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives) and National Policy Objective 55 (promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations);
- The *National Development Plan 2018-2027* which includes decarbonising electricity generation as a measure related to the radical transformation of Ireland's energy system in order to achieve its 2030 and 2050 energy and climate objectives;
- The *National Mitigation Plan 2017* expressly promoting gas as the generation back-up technology;
- The relevant provisions of the *Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019* including Section 8.1 which states that Meath is well placed to encourage and facilitate the development of power generation facilities for reasons including the passage of a number of gas mains through the county, the commentary at Section 8.1.2 that natural gas is the cleanest of all fossil fuels, and policy EC POL 2, (to support international, national and county initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources);
- The planning history of the site, including consents for electricity generating plants, powered by gas, with distillate oil provided as a contingency fuel source rather than the primary fuel source, as is proposed in the current application,

- The adjacency of the proposed development to the natural gas network;
- The documentation submitted with the application, including the Further Information response submitted to the planning authority on 24th May 2019, which states that natural gas is a non-renewable fossil fuel that is cleaner burning, and produces lower CO2 equivalent emissions, than distillate oil,
- The necessity to import and transport by road the distillate fuel oil to the site;

it is considered that the proposed development in its current form with full reliance on the use of distillate oil, would conflict with national obligations relating to greenhouse gas emissions set out under the EU Renewable Energy Directive, would be contrary to national policy relating to the need for decarbonisation of the electricity sector, would not be supportive of the relevant provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, and through the specific use of distillate oil, and would constitute an unsustainable approach in relation to the provision of energy infrastructure to address intermittency in renewable power generation. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Note: The Board considered that the use of the subject site for electricity generation would be fully consistent with the proper planning and sustainable of the area and noted the commentary from the applicant that a connection to gas supply is technically possible though challenging. However, having regard to the totality of Government policy on climate change, energy efficiency and the imperative for decarbonisation of the country's electricity generating system, it was determined that the fuelling of the proposed development by distillate oil is not supportable and that a proposal entailing the use of natural gas, or other fuel source and where distillate oil is not required or would perform a contingency function only, is warranted.

Board Member

Date: 10/12/2019

Chris McGarry