

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Direction
BD-018882-25
ABP-317936-23

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a Board meeting held on 10/02/2025.

The Board decided to refuse permission for the following reasons and considerations.

Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the existing capacity constraints in the electricity network (grid), the lack of a fixed connection agreement to connect to the grid as confirmed in the documentation on file, the lack of significant on-site renewable energy to power the proposed development, the lack of evidence provided in relation to the applicant's engagement with Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) in Ireland, and the reliance on a gas powered plant to provide energy to the development, it is considered that the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the proposed development is acceptable on EE zoned lands, in accordance with EDE7 Objective 2 and Section 12.9.4 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028. Furthermore, on the basis of the information submitted with the application and appeal, including confirmation that there is no available grid connection and that if granted permission, the sole energy source for the data centre would be in the form of on-site gas powered generation in the absence of a confirmed grid connection, it is considered that the proposed development, would not be in accordance with the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy, July 2022, which states that *'islanded' data centre developments that are not connected to the electricity grid and are powered mainly by on-site fossil fuel generation, would not be in line with national policy* and would not be in accordance with the overarching objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2024, by reference to reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions. Having regard to the detail submitted with the application and appeal, the Board determined that a grant of permission for the proposed development, would be inconsistent with national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the

Climate Action Plan 2024. In reaching this decision, the Board has performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in a manner consistent with Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2021. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

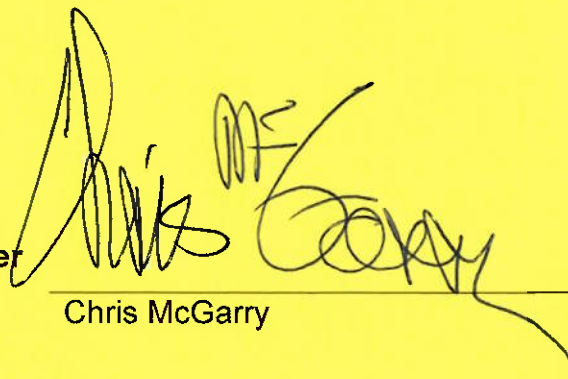
In deciding not to accept the Inspector's recommendation to grant permission, the Board noted and agreed with the commentary of the inspector at paragraph 7.3.7 of her report that, the Government's Statement on the Role of Data Centres 2022, confirms such developments are considered core digital infrastructure which play a vital role in the Irish economy and society, but also that 'islanded' data centres are not in line with national policy. The Board further agreed with the inspector that in this specific case, the operation of the proposed on-site gas power generation system (OSPG) on a long-term basis in the absence of a grid connection would be inappropriate and contrary to national climate obligations.

However, the Board did not share the opinion of the inspector that a shorter term usage of the OSPG (suggested at 8 years and controlled by condition) would be appropriate. In not sharing this opinion, the Board acknowledged the intent of the inspector's recommendation, but considered that a conditioned grant of permission in such form, would mean the powering of the data centre solely by fossil fuel for a period such as 8 years, providing in effect an 'islanded' data centre. Furthermore, it would not address the substantive issue, namely that on the evidence on file, there is no available grid connection.

In this context, the specific case details provide no ability at this time (nor with any measurable and guaranteed timeline) to avail of renewable energy via a grid connection, such that the broader principles and allowances as set out in the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres, could then reasonably be factored into an assessment of the case at hand.

In conjunction with consideration of the relevant development plan policies and objectives and on the basis of consistency with national climate obligations, the Board therefore determined that a refusal of permission was warranted in this case.

Board Member



Chris McGarry

Date: 17/02/2025