



Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2017

Planning Authority: Cork County Council

Planning Register Reference Number: 17/05498

Appeal by Barry and Sinead Aherne of Ballyspillane West, Midleton, County Cork and by Ballyspillane West and Surrounding Area Action Group care of Sinead Aherne of Ballyspillane West, Midleton, County Cork against the decision made on the 4th day of December, 2017 by Cork County Council to grant subject to conditions a permission to Terra Solar II Limited of NovaUCD, Belfield, Dublin in accordance with plans and particulars lodged with the said Council.

Proposed Development: A ten-year permission for the construction of a Solar PV Energy Development comprising installation of circa 84,200 square metres of panels on ground mounted frames/support structures within existing field boundaries, underground cabling and ducting, provision of inverter and transformer stations (combined and separate formats), one number MV substation, one number storage container to house battery storage, one number communications mast, site perimeter stock-proof security fencing, pole mounted CCTV security cameras, internal access tracks, landscaping and all associated site development works. A temporary construction compound will also be provided. All on a circa 27.53-hectare site in the townland of Ballyspillane West, Midleton, County Cork.

Decision

GRANT permission for the above proposed development in accordance with the said plans and particulars based on the reasons and considerations under and subject to the conditions set out below.

Matters Considered

In making its decision, the Board had regard to those matters to which, by virtue of the Planning and Development Acts and Regulations made thereunder, it was required to have regard. Such matters included any submissions and observations received by it in accordance with statutory provisions.

Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to:

- regional and national policy objectives in relation to renewable energy,
- the provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020,
- the nature, scale, extent and layout of the proposed development,
- the topography of the site,
- the existing hedging and screening on the site, and
- the pattern of development in the vicinity,

it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the area or the residential amenities of property in the vicinity, would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, or the ecology of the area and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Appropriate Assessment Screening

The Board completed an Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on European Sites, taking into account the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, the receiving environment, the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report submitted with the planning application and the Inspector's report and submissions on file. In completing the screening exercise, the Board adopted the report of the Inspector and concluded that, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European Site in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted on the 8th day of November, 2017, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of the development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interests of clarity.

2. The period during which the development hereby permitted may be carried out shall be 10 years from the date of this Order.

Reason: Having regard to the nature of the proposed development, the Board considered it reasonable and appropriate to specify a period of the permission in excess of five years.

3. (a) The permission shall be for a period of 25 years from the date of the commissioning of the solar array. The solar array and related ancillary structures shall then be removed unless, prior to the end of the period, planning permission shall have been granted for their retention for a further period.

(b) Prior to commencement of development, a detailed restoration plan, including a timescale for its implementation, providing for the removal of the solar arrays, including all foundations, anchors, inverter/transformer stations, substation, CCTV cameras, fencing and site access to a specific timescale, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority.

(c) On full or partial decommissioning of the solar farm, or if the solar farm ceases operation for a period of more than one year, the solar arrays, including foundations/anchors, and all associated equipment, shall be dismantled and removed permanently from the site. The site shall be restored in accordance with this plan and all decommissioned structures shall be removed within three months of decommissioning.

Reason: To enable the planning authority to review the operation of the solar farm over the stated time period, having regard to the circumstances then prevailing, and in the interest of orderly development.

4. This permission shall not be construed as any form of consent or agreement to a connection to the national grid or to the routing or nature of any such connection.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

5. (a) Existing field boundaries shall be retained, notwithstanding any exemptions available and new planting undertaken in accordance with the Landscape Mitigation Plan submitted to the planning authority on the 8th day of November, 2017.
- (b) All landscaping shall be planted to the written satisfaction of the planning authority prior to commencement of development. Any trees or hedgerow that are removed, die or become seriously damaged or diseased during the operative period of the solar farm as set out by this permission, shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or hedging of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of biodiversity, the visual amenities of the area, and the amenities of dwellings in the vicinity.

6. During the construction phase, the developer shall adhere to the 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes', published by the National Roads Authority in 2006. In particular, there shall be no construction works within 50 metres of such an active sett during the breeding season (December to June).

Reason: In the interest of wildlife protection.

7.
 - (a) No artificial lighting shall be installed or operated on site unless authorised by a prior grant of planning permission.
 - (b) CCTV cameras shall be fixed and angled to face into the site and shall not be directed towards adjoining property or the road.
 - (c) Cables within the site shall be located underground.
 - (d) The inverter/transformer stations shall be dark green in colour. The external walls of the proposed substation shall be finished in a neutral colour such as light grey or off-white and the roof shall be of black slate or tiles.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, of visual and residential amenity and to minimise impacts on drainage patterns and surface water quality.

8. Before construction commences on site, details of the structures of the security fence showing provision for the movement of mammals shall be submitted for prior approval to the planning authority. This shall be facilitated through the provision of mammal access gates every 100 metres along the perimeter fence and in accordance with standard guidelines for provision of mammal access (National Roads Authority 2008).

Reason: To allow wildlife to continue to have access across the site.

9. The developer shall facilitate the archaeological appraisal of the site and shall provide for the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features which may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall:

- (a) notify the planning authority in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of any site operation (including hydrological and geotechnical investigations) relating to the proposed development, and
- (b) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist prior to the commencement of development. The archaeologist shall assess the site and monitor all site development works.

The assessment shall address the following issues:

- (i) the nature and location of archaeological material on the site, and
- (ii) the impact of the proposed development on such archaeological material.

A report, containing the results of the assessment, shall be submitted to the planning authority and, arising from this assessment, the developer shall agree in writing with the planning authority details regarding any further archaeological requirements (including, if necessary, archaeological excavation) prior to commencement of construction works.

In default of agreement on any of these requirements, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the area and to secure the preservation (in-situ or by record) and protection of any archaeological remains that may exist within the site.

10. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including but not limited to, hours of working, noise and dust management measures, surface water management proposals, the management of construction traffic, a structural assessment and monitoring programme of the haul route along the Ballyspillane West Road and the off-site disposal of construction waste.

Reason: In the interests of public safety, residential amenity and protection of the environment.

11. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a bond of an insurance company, a cash deposit, or other security to secure the provision and satisfactory reinstatement of the local public road, Ballyspillane West Road, if damaged by the transport of material to the site in connection with the development, coupled with an agreement empowering the planning authority to apply such security or part thereof to the satisfactory reinstatement of the local public road. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the local public road.

12. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or such other security as may be acceptable to the planning authority, to secure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site on cessation of the project coupled with an agreement empowering the planning authority to apply such security or part thereof to such reinstatement. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site, and to allow wildlife to continue to have access to and through the site.

13. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to the commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.

Michelle Fagan
Member of An Bord Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.

Dated this day of 2018.