



Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2018

Planning Authority: Clare County Council

Planning Register Reference Number: P17/1001

Appeal by John Casey of Lissan West, Clarecastle, County Clare and by others against the decision made on the 16th day of May, 2018 by Clare County Council to grant subject to conditions a permission to Engie Developments Ireland Limited care of McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan of Block 1, G.F.S.C, Moneenageisha Road, Galway in accordance with plans and particulars lodged with the said Council.

Proposed Development: A ten-year permission for the construction and operation of solar PV arrays mounted on metal frames on a 33.1 hectare site, inclusive of a single electrical control building, onsite substation, up to eight number inverter units, up to one number temporary construction area with ancillary facilities, boundary fencing with CCTV units, use of existing access, an access track and all associated works (inclusive of gross floor space of proposed works up to 207.6 square metres), as amended by the further public notice received by the planning authority on the 19th day of April, 2018 at Lissan West, Ballaghafaddy West, Clarecastle, County Clare.

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 the provisions of national and regional policy objectives in relation to renewable energy, the provisions of the Clare County Development Plan 2014–2020 and to the nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would support national and regional renewable energy policy objectives, would be in accordance with the provisions of the development plan, would not seriously injure the residential amenities of property in the vicinity, would not have unacceptable impacts on the visual or environmental amenities of the area, would be acceptable in terms of pedestrian and traffic safety and convenience and would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 1

The Board considered the Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment, the natura impact assessment and all the other relevant submissions and carried out both an appropriate assessment screening exercise and an appropriate assessment in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on designated European Sites.

The Board agreed with the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002165), and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004077), are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2

The Board considered the Natura impact statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for European Sites, namely, the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002165), and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004077), in view of the sites' conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

- (i) the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- (ii) the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and
- (iii) the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the sites' conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Board was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, 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 11th day of April, 2018 and by the further plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 5th day of July, 2018, 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 development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest 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 mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Natura impact statement, and other plans and particulars submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 5th day of July 2018, shall be implemented in full by the developer, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

- (b) Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit a schedule of mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Natura impact statement, and details of a time schedule for implementation of the mitigation measures and associated monitoring, to the planning authority for its written agreement.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

- 4. (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.

5. 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.

6. (a) Existing field boundaries shall be retained, notwithstanding any exemptions available and new planting undertaken in accordance with the plans submitted to the planning authority on the 11th day of April, 2018.
- (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 residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

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 interests of clarity, and of visual and residential amenity.

8. Before construction commences on site, details of the structures of the security fence showing provision for the movement of mammals at regular intervals along the perimeter of the site shall be submitted for prior approval to the planning authority. This shall be facilitated through the provision of mammal access gates designed generally in accordance with standard guidelines for provision of mammal access (NRA 2008).

Reason: To allow wildlife to continue to have access across the site, in the interest of biodiversity protection.

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 (including archaeological testing) 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. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit for the written agreement of the planning authority, details of a SUDS drainage management system, including swales and ponds, if necessary to ensure that stormwater runoff from the site does not exceed that for normal grassed agricultural lands.

Reason: in the interest of preventing flooding.

11. 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 and off-site disposal of construction waste.

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

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.

13. 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 reinstatement of public roads that may be damaged by the transport of materials to the site 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.

14. 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 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.

15. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution as a special contribution under section 48(2) (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 in respect of the improvement of traffic signage on the LS 8250 local secondary road which is necessary to facilitate the development of the site. The amount of the contribution 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 for determination. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be updated at the time of payment in accordance with changes in the Wholesale Price Index – Building and Construction (Capital Goods), published by the Central Statistics Office.

Reason: It is considered reasonable that the developer should contribute towards the specific exceptional costs which are incurred by the planning authority which are not covered in the Development Contribution Scheme and which will benefit the proposed development.

Terry Prendergast
Member of An Bord Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.

Dated this day of 2019.

