

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order ABP-316283-23

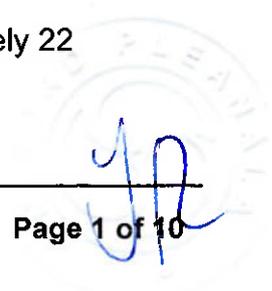
Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2022

Planning Authority: Westmeath County Council

Application for approval under section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 14th day of April, 2023 by Harmony Solar Mullingar Limited care of Fehily Timoney and Company of Core House, Pouladuff Road, Ballypheane, Cork.

Proposed development: The proposed development, consisting of:

1. Construction of a 110kV substation and associated works within a site of approximately 4.5 hectares. The substation, comprising a total compound footprint of 1.29 hectares, enclosed by palisade fencing, will comprise:
 - 1 number single storey substation control building (435 square metres);
 - 1 number single storey customer MV Building (325 square metres);
 - switchgear, arc suppression coil, cable sealing ends, cable chair, circuit breakers, current transformers, disconnects, post insulators, surge arrestors, grid code compliance equipment and voltage transformers;
 - 8 number lightning masts to a height of approximately 18 metres;
 - 1 number telecommunications pole to a height of approximately 22 metres;



- 2.6 metre high palisade guard railing with perimeter boundary fencing will be erected around the periphery of the compound for security and protection measures;
 - lighting will be provided by 4 number lamp posts approximately three metres in height as well as exterior wall mounted lights on the control buildings.
2. Erection of two number line-cable interface masts to enable a loop-in/loop-out connection to the existing Mullingar-Lanesborough 110 kV overhead line. The steel lattice masts will extend to heights of 16 metres and 15 metres above existing ground level.
 3. Permanent access road (circa 1.1 kilometres in length) to allow access to the substation including a short spur (circa 0.1 kilometres) off the main access track to access to the two number line-cable interface masts. The entrance to the local road (L5802) will be shared with the consented Clondardis solar farm.
 4. Associated construction works and drainage infrastructure and installation of temporary construction compound.

The proposed substation and associated works are part of a larger permitted renewable solar energy project, identified as Clondardis Solar Farm, located in the townlands of Clondardis and Slane More, County Westmeath. The permitted solar farm (planning authority Register Reference Number 17/6239, An Bord Pleanála Reference Number ABP-301116-18 and amended under planning authority Register Reference Number 20/6132) consists of a ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and associated ancillary infrastructure.

All located within the townlands of Clondardis and Slane More, County Westmeath.

Decision

APPROVE the proposed development under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, for the following reasons and considerations and subject to the conditions set out below, and

DETERMINE under section 182B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the sum to be paid by the undertaker in respect of costs associated with the application, as set out in the Schedule of Costs below.

Reasons and Considerations

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to the following:

- (a) The nature, scale and extent of the proposed development,
- (b) The characteristics of the site and of the general vicinity,
- (c) European, national, regional and local policy support for developing renewable energy, in particular:
 - Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework,
 - the Climate Action Plan, 2023,
 - Government Policy Statement on the Security of Electricity Supply 2021,
 - the Eastern and Midland Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy 2019-2031,
 - the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027,
- (d) The distance to dwellings and other sensitive receptors from the proposed development,

- (e) The nature of the landscape and absence of any specific conservation or amenity designation for the site,
- (f) The planning history of the immediate area, including the proximity to the permitted solar photovoltaic development with this development serving as the grid connection for that generating asset infrastructure,
- (g) The submissions on file from prescribed bodies and the planning authority,
- (h) The likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely effects of the proposed development on European Sites, and
- (i) The report of the planning Inspector.

Appropriate Assessment Screening:

The Board noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. In completing the screening for appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion in the Inspector's report in respect of the identification of the European Sites which could potentially be affected, and the identification and assessment of the potential likely significant effects of the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on these European Sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

The Board was satisfied that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European Site, in view of the relevant site's conservation objectives.

This screening determination is based on the assessment of the nature and scale of the proposed development, the nature of the relevant European Sites identified in the Inspector's report, the Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests and the substantial separation distance and absence of pathways between the relevant European Sites and the proposed development.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and related policy, it would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape or ecology, it would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, and it 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.

CONDITIONS

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, 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 undertaker 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. All of the environmental, construction and ecological mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Planning and Environmental Report, and other particulars submitted with the application shall be implemented by the undertaker in conjunction with the timelines set out therein, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this Order.

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

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

Reason: In the interests of clarity and having regard to the scale and nature of the proposed development.

4. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works in respect of both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development.

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and public health.

5. An underground sealed wastewater holding tank shall be installed on site with effluent to be removed to a licensed wastewater treatment facility for treatment and disposal at regular intervals. Details of the holding tank shall be submitted for the agreement of the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and public health.

6. The undertaker shall comply with the following requirements:
- (a) No additional 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 roads.
 - (c) Cables within the site shall be located underground.
 - (d) All fencing, gates and exposed metalwork shall be dark green in colour. The roofs of the buildings within the substation compound shall be dark grey or black and the external walls shall be finished in neutral colours such as grey or off-white.

Reason: In the interests of clarity, of visual and residential amenity.

7. The undertaker shall comply with the transportation requirements of the planning authority and other relevant bodies for such works and services as appropriate.

Reason: In the interests of traffic and pedestrian safety.

8. Prior to commencement of development, a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the construction phase shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority, generally in accordance with the Outline Construction Methodology Plan submitted with the application. The CEMP shall incorporate the following:
- (a) a detailed plan for the construction phase incorporating, inter alia, construction programme, supervisory measures, noise, dust and surface water management measures including appointment of a site noise liaison officer, construction hours and the management, transport and disposal of construction waste;
 - (b) a comprehensive programme for the implementation of all monitoring commitments made in the application and supporting documentation during the construction period;
 - (c) an emergency response plan; and
 - (d) proposals in relation to public information and communication.

A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be kept for inspection by the planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and orderly development.

9. The site development and construction works shall be carried out in such a manner as to ensure that the adjoining roads are kept clear of debris, soil and other material and cleaning works shall be carried out on the adjoining public roads by the undertaker and at the undertaker's expense on a daily basis.

Reason: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

10. The undertaker 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 undertaker 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 undertaker 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.

11. Prior to commencement of development, the undertaker shall lodge with the planning authority a bond of an insurance company, a cash deposit, or other security to secure the provision and satisfactory completion of the development, coupled with an agreement empowering the planning authority to apply such security or part thereof to the satisfactory completion of any part of the development.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory completion of the development.

Schedule of Costs

In accordance with the provisions of section 182B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the amount due to be reimbursed to the applicant is **€79,807**.
A breakdown of the Board's costs is set out in the attached Appendix 1.



Tom Rabbette

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

Dated this 6th day of Feb. 2024