

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order ABP-317498-23

Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2022

Planning Authority: Meath County Council

Application for approval under section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, including a Natura Impact Statement, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 30th day of June 2023 by Energia Solar Holdings Limited care of AECOM Ireland Limited, 4th Floor, Adelphi Plaza, George's Street Upper, Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin.

Proposed development: Ten year permission for the construction of a new 220 kilovolt (kV) substation compound and underground cable loop in connection to the existing Gorman-Maynooth 220kV line.

- i. A new 220kV substation compound (approximately 22,639.8 square metres(m²)) including:
 - Outdoor Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) equipment rated for the system voltage of 220 kV equipped with 4 number 220kV cable bays;
 - 14 number lightning protection masts (height 25 metres (m));
 - 2 number oil-filled step-down power transformers positioned within bunded enclosures;
 - 2 number single-storey buildings, including a control building with ancillary services and a customer Medium Voltage (MV) module;
 - a 2.6 metre tall palisade fence;

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- i. Removal of existing overhead line mast to facilitate the construction of 2 number Line-Cable Interface Masts (LCIMs) (21m in height) in line with the existing 220kV overhead line and installation of 220kV underground cables between the masts and substation.
- ii. Telecommunication mast within a 225 square metre enclosure with a maximum height of 36 metre with a 2.6 metre tall palisade fence. In addition to the above, the proposed development will include the following:
 - New site access off the L62051 and internal site access road;
 - Car parking: 5 Passing Bays on the L62051; Drainage infrastructure; and all associated and ancillary site development works.

All located in the townlands of Woodtown, Rathmore, County Meath.

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 surrounding area,
- (c) the national targets for renewable energy,
- (d) European, national, regional and county level support for renewable energy development such as:
 - the Climate Action Plan, 2024,
 - the Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework,
 - the Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032, and
 - the Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027,
- (e) the documentation submitted with the application, including the Environmental Considerations Report, the Natura Impact Statement, and accompanying reports including the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan,
- (f) the contained nature of the landscape and absence of any specific conservation or amenity designation for the site,
- (g) the planning history of the immediate area including proximity to the permitted solar farm (An Bord Pleanála reference Number ABP- 314058-22),
- (h) the distance to dwellings or other sensitive receptors from the proposed development,
- (i) the submissions on file including those from third parties, prescribed bodies and the planning authority,
- (j) the mitigation measures proposed for construction and operation of the site, and
- (k) the initial report and updated report of the Inspector.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement 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 and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect are the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004232).

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 2:

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Board completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the European Sites, River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004232), 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 these European Sites, in view of their conservation objectives.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development that would provide necessary infrastructure to connect three consented solar farms to the national transmission grid, would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and related policy including the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, in particular objective INF OBJ 50 (seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner). The Board was satisfied that the proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape or biodiversity, nor 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. 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.
 - (a) All of the environmental, construction and ecological mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the Environmental Considerations Report, Ecological Impact Assessment (including Table 7, section 4.6 and section 5) and the Natura Impact Statement, 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.
 - (b) Prior to the commencement of development the undertaker shall submit a schedule of all mitigation measures to the planning authority in a single document.

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

4. (a) 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.
- (b) All works in the vicinity of watercourses shall be in accordance with the recommendations in Inland Fisheries Ireland's Guidance Document on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and adjacent to Waters, 2016, and shall be referred to in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and shall be supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works and Project Hydrologist.
- (c) The undertaker shall liaise with Uisce Éireann in respect of connecting to the public water supply.
- (d) Surface water from the site shall not be permitted to drain onto the adjoining public road or adjoining properties.

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

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the undertaker shall comply with the transportation requirements of the planning authority for such works and services as appropriate. Such requirements shall require provision of a detailed Traffic Management Plan and shall include the following details:
- (a) Consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and all private and public companies and road authorities.
- (b) Details of haulage routes, control measures for abnormally sized vehicles and an Abnormal Load Assessment.
- (c) A road condition survey of roads and bridges along the haul route to be carried out at the undertaker's expense and to the satisfaction of the planning authority.
- (d) Detailed arrangements for construction damage to be made good by the undertaker to the satisfaction of the planning authority (to include the L-62051).

- (e) Detailed arrangements for temporary traffic management/controls, to include arrangements for the safe operation of the junction of the R125 and L-62051, and protocols to keep residents informed,
- (f) Construction route signage,
- (g) Road opening licences that will be required,
- (h) Arrangements for the phasing of the development and any concurrent or sequential phase of the Woodtown Solar Farm or cabling in the public road to connect solar farms to the sub-station.
- (i) Detailed design of the site entrance onto the L-62051, with provision of sightlines to the satisfaction of the planning authority and recessed entrance gate.

Reason: In the interest of traffic and pedestrian safety.

6. Prior to the commencement of development, details of CCTV cameras shall be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement. These shall be fixed and angled to face into the site and shall not be directed towards adjoining property or roads.

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

7. Prior to the commencement of development, the following details shall be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement:
- (a) measures to identify and protect root zones of trees and hedgerows in the vicinity of the development site (substation, internal access road, junction with L-62051 and passing bays) and, in the event of damage, measures to restore trees and hedgerows in the vicinity of the development site,
 - (b) detailed arrangements for landscaping/tree/hedgerow planting in the location of the junction with the L-62051, passing bays and in the vicinity of historic monuments, post construction,

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- (c) detailed arrangements for the revegetation of the indicated native meadow plant mix area (Drawing No. 60657534-ACM-DWG-CM-528 Visual Mitigation and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan) by natural revegetation or seeding of native species collected locally, and
- (d) detailed arrangements for the enhancement and strengthening of hedgerows to the west and southwest of the substation site.

The landscaping proposals shall be carried out within the first planting season following commencement of construction of the proposed development. All existing hedgerows shall be retained. The landscaping and screening shall be maintained at regular intervals. Any trees or shrubs planted in accordance with this condition which are removed, die, become seriously damaged or diseased within two years of planting shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those original required to be planted.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, biodiversity, visual and residential amenity and screening of the development.

8. 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) Cables within the site shall be located underground.
 - (c) External finishes to fencing, gates and exposed metalwork (non-galvanised/subject to EirGrid requirements), roof and external walls of substation, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority.

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

9. 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 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. This shall address any concurrent construction phase of Woodtown Solar Farm,
- (b) a comprehensive programme for the implementation of all monitoring commitments made in the application and supporting documentation during the construction period,
- (c) an Invasive Species Eradication and Management Strategy for the site, to include monitoring post completion of works,
- (d) an emergency response plan,
- (e) 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, and
- (f) an outline strategy for any future decommissioning phase, to include means to protect and enhance biodiversity.

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

10. The undertaker shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) to carry out pre-development archaeological testing in areas of proposed ground disturbance and to submit an archaeological impact assessment report for the written agreement of the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, in advance of any site preparation works or groundworks, including site investigation works/topsoil stripping/ site clearance/dredging/underwater works and/or construction works.

The report shall include an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy. Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in-situ, preservation by record and/or monitoring may be required. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the undertaker.

No site preparation and/or construction works shall be carried out on site until the archaeologist's report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the planning authority.

The planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigative works and/or monitoring following the completion of all archaeological work on site and the completion of any necessary post-excavation work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the undertaker.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation, either in situ or by record, of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.


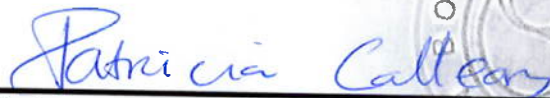
11. Prior to commencement of development, the undertaker shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or such other security as may be acceptable to the planning authority, to secure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site on cessation of the project coupled 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 undertaker or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site.

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 **€85,023**

A breakdown of the Board's costs is set out in the attached Appendix 1.

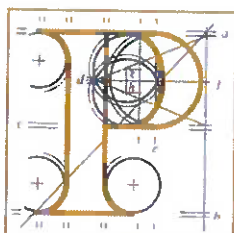


Patricia Calleary

Member of An Bord Pleanála

**duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.**

Dated this 16 day of August 2024



An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order –
Appendix 1

ABP-317498-23

Strategic Infrastructure Development

Costs of determining the Application

Case Number: ABP-317498-23

Proposed Development: 10 year permission for the construction of a 220kV substation compound and all associated works. Located within the townlands of Woodtown, Co. Meath

Board Costs		
(1)	Cost (calculated based on Inspector's time) Inspector 1 (pre-application consultation) €3,585 Inspector 2 (application) €16,192	€19,777
(2)	Costs invoiced to Board	N/A
	Total chargeable costs	€19,777
Board Fees		
(3)	Application Fee - €100,000 Pre-application Consultation Fee- €4,500	€104,500
(4)	Observer fees paid	€300
	Total	€104,800
	Net amount due to be refunded to applicant	€85,023

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Dated this *16* day of *August* 2024