



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Pre- application meeting

ABP-303289-18

Development	Installation of a 110KV substation		
Location	Townlands of Enniscoffey or Caran, Hightown or Ballyoughter, Lowtown or Balleighter, Pass of Kilbride and Rattin, Clonfad County Westmeath.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	15/10/19	Time: 2.30 pm	to 3.20 pm
Attendees			
Representing An Bord Pleanála			
Anne-Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)			
Niall Haverty, Senior Planning Inspector			
Ellen Morrin, Senior Administrative Officer			
Rob Mac Giollarnáth, Executive Officer r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie			
Representing the prospective applicant			
Gavin Lawlor – Tom Phillips and Associates			
Conor McAllister – JBM Solar			
Ronan Creedon – Statkraft			

1.0 Introduction

1.1. The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting a pre-application consultation and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters that it wished to receive advice on.

1.2. The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Board once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. It may form a preliminary view at an early stage in the process on the matter.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

2.0 The prospective applicant's presentation

2.1. A planning application was made to Westmeath County Council for a Solar PV Energy Development on a site of c. 260 hectares across two separate parcels of land on 19th July 2019 (Reg Ref 19/6168). The location of the sub-station was selected (alternatives were looked at) with regard to factors such as visual impact,

distance from residents and flood risk assessment factors. The closest building was a farm building.

- 2.2. Further Information was requested in August 2019 and submitted on the 7th October 2019 and the date for decision is Monday, 4th November 2019. Submission have been received from a number of prescribed bodies, including HSE, TII, DAU and Irish Water.
- 2.3. It is proposed to connect the Solar PV Development to the national grid by connecting to the existing Mullingar - Kinnegad 110kV OHL that traverses the site via the proposed 110kV substation. It is not proposed to connect any other development via the proposed substation.
- 2.4. It is proposed by EirGrid to modify the existing Mullingar 110kV - Kinnegad 110kV circuit by looping into the identified substation location.
- 2.5. The proposed modifications to the existing 110kV OHL will consist of the removal of a section of the existing OHL which will be replaced by 2 No. line cable interface masts (c. 12m height) and 2 no. underground cables which will connect the proposed substation with the line cable interface towers. The 38Kv underground cable connection to the solar farm forms part of the solar farm application.
- 2.6. Substation is intended to house switchgear and control equipment required to export electricity from Solar PV Development to the national grid. The details and ancillary equipment will be built to EirGrid / ESNB requirements and Eirgrid have asked that the sub-station be built to allow for possible future expansion.

3.0 Discussion

- 3.1. The following matters were discussed:
 - **Preliminary View:** The preliminary view of the Board is that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development.
 - **Environmental Report:** The capacity of the development will be 100 MW and it will be the largest solar farm in the country to date. A Planning and Environmental report was submitted with the solar farm application. The prospective applicant stated that the substation had been included in the

assessments undertaken for the solar development application in the interest of addressing the overall cumulative impact of the development.

- **Appropriate Assessment:** A Screening Report was submitted with the solar farm application which found no likely significant effects on a European Site. The Board noted the need for proper consideration of potential in-combination effects, and stated that measures intended to avoid or reduce likely significant effects, including best practice construction methods, cannot be taken into account when screening for AA.
- **Roads:** There was some discussion regarding the use of the local road 'the bog road' for construction traffic. Agreement has been reached in this regard with the local authority regarding its use for certain exceptional loads (it is 5 metres in width) and a pre and post construction survey of the road will be carried out.
- **Flooding:** The Board highlighted that flooding would be a key issue and flood plains should be avoided. The prospective applicant was of the view that they had already done a large amount of work in this area and had prepared their own flood maps. A site specific flood risk assessment will be required.
- **Archaeology:** There is an archaeological site at the location and following discussion with the planning authority a certain limited amount of geophysical investigation would be carried out.
- **Other planning and environment considerations:** The following issues should also be addressed in any future planning application:
 - hydrological issues including changes to drainage patterns (with particular reference to any water dependant terrestrial ecosystems)
 - ecology (especially in relation to the nearby Bog NHA)
 - impact of any bog/peat excavation
 - landscape and visual impact
 - residential amenity (including operational noise and construction impacts).

Drawings: A drawing showing the entire scheme (solar farm, substation and associated works) at a suitable scale should be submitted. An aerial photograph showing same would also be useful.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1. The Board states that it is likely that a further meeting will not be necessary. The record of the instant meeting will issue by the Board to the prospective applicant who can submit any comments it may have on the record.
- 4.2. If formal closure of the pre-application procedure is requested by the prospective applicant, the reporting inspector will complete the report and recommendation which will be forwarded to the Board for SID determination. A decision will then issue to the prospective applicant. The Board advised the prospective applicant that this final stage of the process might take approximately four weeks.
- 4.3. A copy of the procedures for the making of an application to the Board are attached.



Anne Marie O'Connor
Assistant Director of Planning