



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-307970-20 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-307970-20 Development of a 110kV substation at Lysaghtstown, Co. Cork.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	21/10/20	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	N/A	End Time	11.50 a.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Donal Fewer, Terra Solar II Limited
Richard Barker, Macroworks
Conor Frehill, HW Planning

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations 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 it wished to receive advice on from the Board. 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.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective set out the nature and extent of the proposed development which comprises a 110kV substation and related infrastructure to serve as a grid connection for a permitted solar farm of circa 150 hectares. The location of the proposed substation (north-west of Midleton) was outlined by the prospective applicant vis-à-vis the boundary for the permitted solar farm.

The prospective applicant advised that permissions for the various phases of the solar farm were granted by Cork County Council between January 2019 and March 2020; these were not the subject of any planning appeals to the Board. The prospective applicant has held consultations with Eirgrid in relation to the nature of the grid connection for the site; Eirgrid indicated its preference for a loop-in connection to connect the permitted solar farm. The prospective applicant said that it intends to apply for a grid connection to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) circa September 2021 subject to planning permission having been obtained for the proposed development.

The prospective applicant elaborated further on the proposed development and the overall project. The proposed development will consist of a 110kV four-bay C-Type substation and associated loop-in infrastructure to tie into the existing 110kV overhead transmission line at Lysaghtstown, County Cork. The permitted solar farm consists of three phases with a fourth planned north of Phase 3. The proposed development will also include an access track from the site entrance at the L-7634 to the substation location, site restoration, earthworks and landscaping. The 110kV substation will comprise a separate 110kV Eirgrid compound and a 33kV customer compound. The loop-in connection will involve the breaking of the existing 110kV overhead lines to facilitate connection to the national grid.

The prospective applicant stated that it anticipates a SID application to the Board for the substation and grid connection; it also stated its intention to apply to the local authority for an amendment to Phase 1 of the solar farm development (amendment to Planning Authority Ref. 18/6769); this will entail the removal of some solar panels to accommodate the proposed substation and the addition of other solar panels elsewhere within the site. With regard to this latter application, the prospective

applicant advised that it held a pre-planning meeting with representatives of Cork County Council on the 16th September, 2020. The planning application, to be lodged circa mid-November 2020, will exclude the substation and grid connection from the proposed development description but will involve assessment of the entire development as part of a 'one-project' approach.

The prospective applicant stated its opinion that the proposed substation and grid connection would constitute strategic infrastructure development given that it meets the threshold of 110kV for high voltage electricity lines and comprises transmission having regard to the fact that the proposed substation will form a new node on the existing transmission network. The proposed development would be of strategic importance with regard to policy objectives set out under the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. The prospective applicant also referred to a number of precedent pre-application consultation cases in which the Board had determined the proposed developments to be SID.

Board's comments/queries:

The Board's representatives stated their preliminary view that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development.

The Board's representatives noted the cumulative assessment approach being undertaken by the prospective applicant and endorsed this.

The Board noted that the subject site for the proposed substation and grid connection is quite upland in nature and somewhat exposed in the context of the surrounding landscape; the Board advised that the site selection process will need to be demonstrated as robust in any forthcoming planning application. The Board also advised that EIA screening would need to be considered as appropriate.

With respect to the matter of cumulative assessment, the prospective applicant enquired as to whether this ought to be conducted in the context of the already permitted solar farm or having regard to the intended amendment application to the planning authority. The Board noted that in terms of the lands in the immediate

vicinity of the proposed substation, there would be no material difference between the consented development and any proposed amendments.

With regard to Appropriate Assessment, the prospective applicant noted that Stage 1 AA had been undertaken in respect of the three applications for the consented solar farm; it added that this is also its intention with regard to the instant proposed development. The Board advised that the Appropriate Assessment screening process should ensure that proposed mitigation measures are not taken into account and that all European Sites in the vicinity of the proposed development are properly assessed. The prospective applicant indicated that it would revert to Ecology Ireland and consider the matters raised by the Board.

In relation to landscape issues raised by the Board, the prospective applicant said that the site selection process had sought to identify a suitable site which would be as discreet as possible with respect to the surrounding landscape. The prospective applicant advised that visibility was examined from three separate locations and that terrain and vegetation screening was taken into consideration as part of the overall process. Key receptors in the vicinity were taken into account in the selection of the preferred site and additional screening can be added where necessary. The photomontages prepared for the applications on the three phases of the consented solar farm can be employed for the purposes of this application.

Conclusion:

In response to the prospective applicant's query on the matter, the Board's representatives said that the next step in the pre-application consultation process is for the record of this meeting to issue and for the prospective applicant to decide if it requires a further meeting or wishes to formally close the process. If formal closure is sought, then it will be a matter for the inspector to complete the report and make a recommendation to the Board as to whether the proposed development is SID.

The prospective applicant said that a further meeting would probably not be required from its perspective and it stated its intention to lodge a SID application circa the last two weeks of November 2020. The prospective applicant emphasised that it would wish for a SID decision to be expedited by the Board as quickly as possible with regard to this timeline. It stressed in particular that it has target dates to meet in 2021 for the Renewable Energy Support Scheme and the grid connection agreement

application. The Board's representatives indicated that every effort would be made to assist the prospective applicant in this regard.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant may then request closure to the process, or a further meeting if required.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.

pp Kieron Someer

Brendan Wyse

Assistant Director of Planning