



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting

ABP-308120-20

Development	Proposed 110kV substation at Srah, Rhode, Co. Offaly		
Location	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	19/10/20	Time	11a.m. – 12:00p.m.

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector		
Jennifer Sherry, Executive Officer	j.sherry@pleanala.ie	01-8737266
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Peter Thomson, PT Planning Solutions		
Kevin O'Regan, Malone O'Regan Environmental		
Brian Mackey, Malone O'Regan Environmental		
Carlos Galvan, PSC Consulting		

Introduction

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 applicant provided the Board with an overview of the proposed development which comprises a 110kV substation to be developed on a 1.1-hectare site. The proposed 110kV substation will be connected to a Solar PV development with associated battery storage of up to 50MW, which is subject of a separate planning application that was lodged with Offaly County Council on 13th October, 2020. The overall development area will be 132 hectares located within the townland of Srah, Co. Offaly.

The prospective applicant set out the context of the proposed development, which will form a connection point on the national grid by connecting to Rhode power station. The proposed substation will be a node on the national grid and will have capacity to facilitate future renewable energy projects in the area.

It is proposed to build the substation to EirGrid standards to be part of the transmission system and future proof for other users. The prospective applicant indicated the overall project will only use 48% of the 85MW maximum output capacity, allowing for future user capacity.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed as part of the meeting:

- The prospective applicant noted that the proposed substation will be tail-fed and will become a mesh node as part of the network. After completion of the proposed development EirGrid will be the owner of the substation. Immediately on completion the proposed substation will constitute part of the transmission system. The Board's representatives advised that the vast majority of substations which are determined to be strategic infrastructure are loop in loop out. The prospective applicant advised they are following the specific connection policy

guide and the methodology for a loop in loop out facility is not justified on a cost basis. In terms of the significance or functioning of the substation the method of connection is not a relevant matter.

- The prospective applicant discussed the difference between tail-fed and loop in and loop out connections and the rationale behind the least cost connection method. A number of similar cases were discussed, and the prospective applicant agreed to follow up with details of EirGrid connection policy and similar cases to the Board.
- The Board's representatives noted that as part of any future planning application the applicant might consider indicating whether the owners are beneficiaries of the proposed Solar development and the planning status of the houses. Any potential impacts relating to noise, dust or landscaping might be addressed. The prospective applicant said they have been in consultation with property owners and intend to increase screening at these locations. To the west of the development site is farm buildings, to the south is a derelict house and across the road is a house which was damaged in a fire and now subject to planning.
- The prospective applicant advised it intends to submit a Natura Impact Statement with the planning application which considers the cumulative effects of the overall development. It is noted there are hydrological links from the site through the Yellow River to the River Boyne and Blackwater SAC and SPA. Also, the prospective applicant advised the Board that an extensive ecological study was carried out which showed otters using the watercourse with no holts on site.
- The Board's representatives enquired if anything to note was brought up in wider consultations. The prospective applicant stated pre-application consultations were carried out with the local authority on the associated proposed Solar PV development and with residents in the area. There were no issues to note.

Conclusion

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. Following this, the prospective applicant should seek a second meeting, if required, with the Board or request closure to the pre-application process in writing. If closure to the pre-application is requested, the reporting inspector will complete the report and recommendation which will be forwarded to the Board for determination. A copy of the procedures will be attached, and the decision will then issue to the prospective applicant.

Brendan Wyse

Assistant Director of Planning