



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-311276-21 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	Proposed 220kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation. Kiltotan & Collinstown, Rochfortbridge, Co. Westmeath		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	20/10/21	Start Time	11.00 a.m.
Location	N/A	End Time	11.55 a.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Sarah Lynch, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Colm Staunton
Nigel Reams
Jake Bracken
John Tierney

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 gave a presentation on the setting, rationale for and description of the proposed development.

The proposed GIS substation will be located roughly at the mid-point on the existing 220kV overhead line between Shannonbridge and Maynooth. The site is located on lands between the R446 regional road and M6 motorway. The prospective applicant stated that there are no Natura 2000 sites close to the site, no geological heritage sites, archaeological or architectural sites on the lands and no record of flooding or flood risk.

The development will consist of a two storey GIS substation building, a 36 metre high communication tower, new entrance and roadway and two 220kV underground circuits forming a connection to the Shannonbridge-Maynooth 220kV overhead line via two new mini-interface electrical compounds and two single circuit 23 metre high towers.

The prospective applicant clarified that it proposes to construct a new access road to the site as opposed to using an existing local road. The prospective applicant has consulted with Westmeath County Council about using the existing local road as a secondary/emergency access to the site.

It was stated that the proposed development would create a new node on the network, and conforms with Eirgrid's need for reinforcement of the 220kV transmission infrastructure in the Midlands.

Two separate energy projects have been applied for to Westmeath County Council on the adjoining lands, an energy storage project and a reserve gas generator. The prospective applicant clarified that one EIAR had been prepared for all three development applications.

The prospective applicant stated that a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation was chosen over an Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) substation due to its positioning indoors, smaller footprint and lesser impact on the receiving environment.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development will be a 'loop in – loop out' configuration, therefore forming part of the transmission network. The

prospective applicant stated that, for this reason, the development falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and would constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development.

The prospective applicant clarified that this was a strategically chosen site, chosen specifically to reinforce the Shannonbridge to Maynooth line with a new node, which will enable maintenance and upgrading work on the line, without having to shut the whole line down.

Discussion:

It was clarified that the two adjacent developments, which are currently under application with Westmeath County Council are both at public submission stage.

When queried on feedback from consultation with neighbouring properties, the prospective applicant stated that there had been mixed feedback.

The prospective applicant clarified that the three developments and their location on the site had been designed with noise mitigation in mind. The reserve gas generator was to be located close to the motorway, furthest away from sensitive receivers and the battery storage plant has very low noise emissions. The prospective applicant stated that the noise model indicated that there would be no significant impact on noise levels.

The prospective applicant clarified that no unusually large loads or external road works would be required to during the construction period.

The Board's representatives queried what triggered the need for an EIAR and what class of development it fell under. The prospective applicant stated that the need for EIAR was triggered by the gas generator. It was agreed that the prospective applicant would revert further to the Board on this point.

Regarding NIS, the prospective applicant clarified that a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Report had determined that an NIS was not required. This report will form part of any future application.

The Board's representatives stated that their preliminary view that the proposed development does constitute SID. The final decision on this will however be with the Board.

The prospective applicant stated that they intend to make an application for development at the end of November.

Conclusion:

The record of the instant meeting will issue in due course and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting. The onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process.



Brendan Wyse

Assistant Director of Planning

21 October 2021

