



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-314006-22 1st meeting

Description	ABP-314006-22 - Proposed development of a 220kV substation and grid connection in lieu of already permitted 2x 38kV substations granted by Louth County Council to facilitate solar and battery storage system development and proposed extensions, Tooms and Monvallet, County Louth		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation.		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	08/09/2022	Time	11:00am –11:45am

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Breda Gannon, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Eimear Reilly, Executive Officer		
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Ryan McBirney - Strategic Power Projects Limited		
Kevin O' Regan - Malone O' Regan Environmental		
Ruairi Geary – TLI Group		
Peter Thomson - Peter Thomson Planning Solutions		

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 5th July 2022, 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 that it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- 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 in any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant provided a brief introduction to Strategic Power Projects Limited. The prospective applicant is an Irish company, experienced in utility scale solar PV and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), with 18 current projects throughout Ireland.

The proposed development consists of a 220kV substation and a 360 metre 220kV underground grid connection cable to form the connection point to the national grid for permitted solar PV and battery storage facility developments (Louth County Council Planning References: 21/631 – Phase 1 and 21/1478 – Phase 2). The proposed 220kV substation is to be developed in lieu of two 38kV substations which were permitted under Louth County Council planning reference: 21/631, on the same part of the site. It is also proposed that the new 220kV substation would serve a phase 3 solar PV development that will further extend the solar PV arrays. A planning application was submitted to Louth County Council in July 2022 for this phase 3 development (Louth County Council planning reference: 22/534), which is currently at further information stage. It was submitted by the prospective applicant that all 3 phases would utilise one single 220kV connection into the existing Louth substation.

It was noted by the prospective applicant that the proposed 220kV substation would be situated on the same part of the site but with a much smaller footprint from that already permitted. The overall footprint of the 220kV substation hardstanding area is reduced by approximately 25%, and the footprint of the buildings, plant and equipment reduced by approximately 50%. The prospective applicant said this reduction would also have a reduction in visual impact as a result.

The prospective applicant contends that the proposed 220kV substation to serve the overall solar and battery storage development will have a tail-fed grid connection under the public road directly into Louth (Monvallet) 275kV substation and will not be a node on the national grid and, therefore, would not constitute SID. Several precedent cases were presented, which the Board determined not to be SID.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion is that the proposed development would comprise strategic infrastructure given the nature of the proposed development and with particular regard to section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. In more recent determinations, the Board has deemed substations of 110kV and greater and their associated 110kV grid connections to be SID, notwithstanding their tail-fed nature. The Board's representatives referred to ABP-311032-21 and the associated Inspector's Report which lists 8 examples of recent and relevant precedents. The Board's representatives stated that the final decision would be a matter for the Board.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of matters such as cumulative impacts and in-combination effects particularly in relation to the permitted (phase 1 and 2) and the proposed phase 3 solar development and to ensure these items are comprehensively addressed within the Natura Impact Statement.
- The Board's representative said if the Board determine the proposed development as SID, details relating to site access would need to be submitted to the Board.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said a response was received from the National Monuments Service in respect of the solar farm development.
- In response to a query in relation to decision timelines, the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to submit a robust application and NIS to reduce the likelihood of a further information request.

Conclusion

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant, and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if it requires a further meeting or if it wishes to close the pre-application consultation process.

 12/9/22

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning

