



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-315655-23

Case Reference / Description	ABP-315655-23 – Proposed development Brittas Wind Farm in the townlands of Brittas, Rossestown and Clobanna, near Thurles, Co. Tipperary.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	05/05/23	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	11:45 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Staff Members

Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Alaine Clarke, Senior Planning Inspector

Eimear Reilly, Executive Officer

e.reilly@pleanala.ie

01-8737184

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Eamonn Hutton – Ørsted – Project Manager

Áine Ryan – MWP – Project Manager

Maura Talbot – MWP – EIAR Manager

Eoin O'Connor – MWP - Planner

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 23rd January 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 37B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended 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's representatives 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 made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant, Brittas Wind Farm Limited, a subsidiary of Ørsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited, a renewable energy company, gave an overview of the project team, noting the project consultants to be Malachy Walsh & Partners (MWP). MWP were appointed by Orsted in Nov 2022 to prepare the design, environmental assessment, and planning application for the proposed development. It also noted that Woodrow Sustainable Solutions are preparing the biodiversity surveys and assessments for the proposed development, including Ornithology, Aquatic Ecology, Habitats, Mammals including bats and other taxa, the AA Screening Report, and the NIS

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development, stating that the study area is located in the townlands of Brittas, Rossestown, Clobanna, Brownstown, Clonamuckoge Beg, Clonamuckoge More and Tooreen, County Tipperary, located 3km north of Thurles, and noting the topography of the site to be relatively flat.

In relation to wind energy policy areas, it was highlighted that the proposed site is located in an area identified as open to consideration for Wind Farms, as per the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The proposed development was said to consist of 9-11 turbines with a yield of +50MW, with max tip height of 185m, including foundations and hardstand areas, as well as on-site turbine access roads and interconnecting underground electrical cabling, a substation on the site, a temporary construction compound, a meteorological mast, spoil management areas, and on-site tree-felling. It was noted that potential grid connection options are currently under consideration.

As the energy output of the proposed development would exceed 50MW, the prospective applicant held the opinion that the proposed development would likely constitute strategic infrastructure development as it falls within the class "Energy

Infrastructure” relating to wind power installation for energy production as set out in the Seventh Schedule of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended). It also stated that the proposed development meets the conditions set out under section 37A(2) (a) and (b) of the Act and noted its hopes to submit an application under this section to the Board in December 2023.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of its progress to date, stating that 2 years of Ornithology data has been collected and that this surveying will continue into August 2023. It stated that full Bat survey work has been completed, along with a Telecoms and Aviation Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, and an Initial Constraints analysis. The Baseline Environmental Studies are largely complete, and the first iteration of the layout of the proposed development is currently under development.

In relation to consultations, the prospective applicant stated that Statutory Consultation letters were distributed in December 2022 as part of the EIAR process, and that a pre-planning meeting with Tipperary County Council was held on 1st March 2023. It noted that this meeting was beneficial and that no major issues arose from it. Community engagement was initiated in the summer of 2022, and included two newsletter drops in June 2022 and April 2023, as well as a public information evening at Semple Stadium in Thurles on 17th April 2023.

The prospective applicant provided details of the overall project, stating that the defined developable area has been determined based on the existing nearby dwellings and a setback of 4 times the tip height of the turbines, and noting that the site consists of mostly agricultural land.

The turbine delivery route which is currently under consideration follows Foynes to Nenagh via N69 & M7, R498 from Nenagh to Thurles, and N62 from Thurles to the proposed development site. It was noted that consultations have taken place with Tipperary County Councils Road Department regarding the route. In relation to the local access roads, the prospective applicant provided a drawing of four potential

access points. The road and access layout will be finalised once the turbine layouts have been completed.

The grid connection options were outlined. It was stated that the site is located approximately 3km straight-line distance from the Thurles 110kV substation. Eirgrid have noted that this substation is quite constrained and so unless upgrades are made, this may not be an option. The most likely alternative is the Ballyragget 110kV substation which is approximately 30km straight-line distance from the proposed development site, however, EirGrid will not make an offer until post planning approval so both options will be assessed in EIAR.

The prospective applicant provided a drawing of the proposed development location relative to other existing and pre-planning windfarms within a 20km radius, stating the closest as being approximately 8-9km to the north-west of the site.

The EIAR content was outlined by chapter, and it was noted that each specialist impact assessment chapter will include methodology, baseline assessments, impact assessment of the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases, proposed mitigation where required, any design changes to reduce or remove impacts, and residual impacts and cumulative effects.

Discussion:

- In response to a question from the Board's representatives in relation to the threshold for SID, the prospective applicant confirmed that it has been modelling 6MW machines at the site and that it intends to develop 9-11 turbines on site. If 9 turbines were to be developed, the output of 54MW would exceed the threshold for SID. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to submit exact details of the anticipated output from the windfarm in writing following receipt of the minutes of the instant meeting. It was stated that the Board cannot determine whether or not the proposal constitutes SID unless certainty is established regarding the electricity output of the windfarm.
- A general conversation took place regarding potential grid connections. The prospective applicant confirmed that connecting to the Ballyragget substation would take place along existing roadways where possible, and that sections of overhead-lines may be included where necessary due to policy and possibly disruption. It noted that there are no Natura sites along the connection route, however, the Board's representatives noted that the River Nore SPA runs through Ballyragget and advised that this should be considered.
- In response to a query regarding consultations with NPWS, the prospective applicant stated that it issued a statutory notification letter issued to NPWS with no clear response received to date. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant of the importance of consulting with NPWS. The prospective applicant replied that it would continue to seek a meeting with the prescribed body.
- In relation to sensitive receptors, the Board's representatives asked for detail regarding the number of properties within the setback area at the proposed site. The prospective applicant confirmed that its recent newsletter drop covered approximately 200 houses within 1.5km radius of the site. It noted that 50 of those dwellings are located within the 740m setback. The Board's representatives asked if there are any landowners involved in the scheme. The prospective applicant replied that approximately 7 or 8 dwellings are landowners and stated that specific figures can be confirmed. In response to follow up question from the Board's

representatives, it was confirmed that the recent public meeting was well attended.

- The Board's representatives advised that TII be consulted particularly in relation to haul route capacity, and that IFI and OPW should be consulted in relation to flood-risk. The prospective applicant replied that it will follow up on these consultations, while also noting that it has received a standard reply from TII.
- In relation to turbine foundations, the Board's representatives asked if onsite borrow pits would be considered. The prospective applicant replied that they would not and confirmed that it would instead be importing aggregate material from quarries. The Board's representatives advised that the cumulative impact of this be assessed in the EIAR.
- In response to a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant confirmed that tree-felling would take place to the south of the site. A section of historic woodland which will be avoided. It also confirmed that bat activity has been recorded in this area, and the Board's representatives advised that the impact of the felling and overall development on the bat activity be considered.
- Following a question from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant stated that the area does not include any major amenity trails. The Board's representatives advised that this be dealt with in the population and human health section of the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives noted the consultations held with Tipperary County Council and advised resolving any outstanding issues with the council very important as the Board will have significant regard to any issues or points in any submission from the Council.
- The Board's representatives advised that major accidents be assessed in the EIAR. The prospective applicant replied that it would do so.
- The Board's representatives sought clarity on the definition of the section of the EIAR pertaining to "any design changes". The prospective applicant replied that would cover design rational and alternatives considered.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to consider the Derryadd Windfarm judgment in relation to assessing design options separately within the EIAR.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process. The Board's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued in the meantime and that 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.



Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning