



Case Reference / Description	Proposed development of a new electricity grid substation compound, a medium voltage switchgear and control equipment building, a building housing indoor high voltage (HV) gas insulated switchgear (GIS) equipment, high voltage busbar connections, step-down power transformers, and underground cables connecting the proposal to the existing 110kV overhead lines in Halverstown, Naas, Co. Kildare.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	14/03/23	Start Time	11:00 p.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	11:40 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Members		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Anthony Kelly, Planning Inspector		
Eimear Reilly, Executive Officer	e.reilly@pleanala.ie	01-8737184
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Ian Howard – Project Manager		
Kieran Kennedy – Project Planner – RPS		
Michael Higgins - Project Planner – RPS		
Robert Thorogood – Project Design Team – HDR		
Jim McEntee – Project Design Team - HDR		

Introduction

The Board's representatives referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 26th January 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, in respect of the above-mentioned proposed development. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board. They 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 made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant, Herbata Limited, represented by RPS Group, gave an overview of the proposed site location, which is approximately 2.5km west of Naas, County Kildare, to the west of the M7 motorway. It was stated that the site is bounded to the north by the R409 road which provides a direct link to the centre of Naas. It was stated that the subject lands are agricultural, and that the entire site comprises approximately 37 hectares of mostly fields with some individual buildings. To the north are Osberstown business park and Osberstown wastewater treatment plant, and to the south is the M7 business park. The proposed development subject of the pre-application consultation comprises an area of 2.9 hectares.

The prospective applicant stated that the subject land is zoned exclusively for data centre use in the Naas Local Area Plan.

For context, the prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed data centre on the adjoining lands which will be subject to a planning application to Kildare County Council and comprises:

- 6 no. two storey data centre buildings,
- an administration / management building, car parking, landscaping,
- on-site power generation using gas turbines and engines,
- fuel storage using diesel/HVO primarily and some limited gas storage, and
- all associated development.

It noted that a second pre-planning meeting is scheduled with Kildare County Council in relation to this development on 15th March 2023.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development which comprises a new electricity grid substation compound, a medium voltage switchgear and control equipment building, a building housing indoor high voltage (HV) gas insulated switchgear (GIS) equipment, high voltage busbar connections, step-down power transformers, and underground cables connecting the proposal to the existing 110kV overhead lines that cross the proposed development site. It stated the importance of providing the ability to export onto the grid as well as the ability to link

into renewable energy sources away from the site, and to use the connection as a backup during maintenance of the gas turbines.

An existing 220kV transmission line crosses the site. The 110kV line which also crosses the site will be broken into and the circuit will then be undergrounded, with the proposed grid substation being located at the north west corner of the overall site.

The proposed development is based on an EirGrid standard 8-bay GIS substation and includes the following:

- 110kV GIS Building/Grid Substation c. 1350sqm and 15m in height;
- Undergrounding of a 110kV transmission line;
- 1 no. dropdown tower (16m in height);
- Connection of new 110kV underground cables into the new GIS Grid Substation;
- Client control building;
- Internal road layout;
- Boundary fences;
- Underground services (watermain, surface water, foul, power); and
- Ancillary works.

It was noted that there will be spare bays to facilitate future growth.

The substation will become a new substation node on the national transmission network, forming an integrated part of the network. The new substation and associated underground cable will form part of the existing transmission grid.

The prospective applicant considered that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development stating that the development falls within the scope of s.182A (1) and (9) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). It also listed a number of planning precedents similar to the proposed development which the Board determined to constitute strategic infrastructure development.

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives gave their preliminary opinion that the proposed development would likely constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that this is a decision for the Board.
- The Board's representatives queried whether the gas network was on-site. The prospective applicant replied that it is not far from the site but will have to be extended and an above-ground installation (AGI) will be provided.
- The Board's representatives noted that one of the purposes of the proposed substation is to allow the data centre site to draw power from the grid as and when required, and queried how often this would be required. The prospective applicant replied that it would be occasional and planned with Eirgrid. It noted that to allow for access to renewable sources elsewhere in Ireland, a connection onto the site is needed, and as such the prospective applicant intends to link with a wind producer or solar farm with a CPPA agreement to bring power into the site. It stated that this will minimise the need for the data centre to draw power from the grid. It is intended to export more than it will import.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that the primary source of power for the proposed development will be from gas turbines and that once its targets are met, the excess will be exported. It will make a producer application to Eirgrid, rather than a demand application.
- A general discussion took place in relation to GNI's Vision 2050 to replace, where possible, the fossil fuel-based methane with bio-methane, carbon capture, and hydrogen. The prospective applicant will ensure that the gas generators onsite will be equipped to accept at least 30% hydrogen. GNI has requested the prospective applicant to provide facilities for bio-methane injection on-site. This will reduce the carbon footprint of the proposed development. The Board advised the prospective applicant to highlight this within the application documents.

- The Board's representatives queried whether the proposed development would be constructed in tandem with the proposed data centre. The prospective applicant clarified that the electrical substation and provision of roads would be the first works carried out on site.
- The Board's representatives queried whether there are any plans to widen the R409. The prospective applicant stated they have no current plans to do so but the road may need works to be carried out.
- There would be a requirement for SCADA communications within the substation, but there would not be any commercial telecommunications masts.
- The prospective applicant stated that Kildare County Council advised it to compile one environmental impact assessment report (EIAR) for both developments. The prospective applicant was advised to ensure a clear distinction between the separate applications and consent approval routes in documentation e.g. EIAR and Natura impact statement (NIS), and it should be clear what is being sought from what planning authority.
- The prospective applicant stated that it intends to lodge the data centre application to Kildare County Council in May 2023 and the application for the proposed development to the Board in October 2023. The Board queried whether any public consultation had been carried out. No significant public consultation has been.
- The prospective applicant stated that it was not clear just yet as to whether an NIS would be required. Work in relation to this is ongoing.

Conclusion:

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

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning