



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-319140-24

Case Reference / Description	ABP-319140-24 - Proposed C-Type AIS 110 kV substation and grid connection which is comprised of an underground cable looping into the existing Derryiron - Timahoe 110 kV circuit and all associated site works. Located at Oldcourt Solar Farm, Co. Kildare.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	12/04/2024	Start Time	10:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	10:30 a.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Susan Clarke, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer
Ellen Moss, Executive Officer
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Breena Coyle, Jennings O'Donovan
Sarah Jones, Jennings O'Donovan
Evan Concar, Jennings O'Donovan

Eamon Ronan, TLI
Alistair Clarke, TLI
Alan Reynolds, Obton
William Brennan, Obton

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 26th February 2024, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182E 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 began their presentation by introducing the applicant company. Obton Limited is an international solar energy developer based in Denmark. They have 2,155 MW of solar projects in operation with 1000 MWh's in the planning and development stage in Ireland.

Kildare County Council granted planning permission for a solar farm at Oldcourt in November 2022 comprising of 2,697 solar arrays with an export capacity of 100 MW. The prospective applicant provided a map of the layout of the Oldcourt solar farm and noted that the proposed substation is within the red line boundary of the solar farm.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development which will comprise of a new on-site AIS 110kV substation and grid connection comprising underground cabling and associated works, all to be contained within agricultural lands.

The prospective applicant discussed the need for the proposed development and stated that Oldcourt would provide 100 MW towards the Government's solar target of 8GWh by 2030.

The grid connection route is proposed to run underground to reduce environmental impacts. All three grid connection route options will be on agricultural land with total lengths of 1000m, 740m and 705m, respectively. The prospective applicant illustrated the three options on the maps provided with the presentation and gave a

summary of each option. The main aim of Option One is to limit the number of outages needed for the construction of the foundations. Option Two has the shortest cable run but would require an outage. Option Three requires two culvert crossings and removal of the existing overhead line.

The prospective applicant also provided a drawing of the AIS substation layout. The same substation design will be provided irrespective of which grid connection option is selected. The prospective applicant stated that Eirgrid have a current project to update the existing circuit and introduce fibre to the line. The prospective applicant plans to utilise the outages on the Eirgrid project for construction of the proposed development.

The prospective applicant mentioned that up to two drains will be crossed by the underground routes and it is proposed to be via culvert-over-crossing. An access road will be installed over a culvert in the northeast of the site, which would accommodate a cable circuit. The prospective applicant provided examples of a culvert-over-crossings, a 110kV trench and a 110kV cable duct joint bay. However, it was stated by the prospective applicant that is unlikely that a cable joint will be required in this project.

The prospective applicant stated that an ecological appraisal was carried out for the Oldcourt solar farm. Five Special Areas of Conservation and one Special Protection Area were identified within a 15km zone. The prospective applicant discussed the project in the context of the policies for renewable energy in the Kildare County Development Plan. The prospective applicant gave their opinion that the proposed development could constitute a strategic infrastructure development under the scope of 182E but sought the Board's opinion in this regard.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives requested clarity on the overall cable length in the grid connection route of Option One. The prospective applicant stated that there are two circuits of 500m, bringing the total cable length to 1000m.
- The prospective applicant stated that regarding grid connection route Option Three, it is proposed to remove the overhead cable. The line will remain until the project is ready to be commissioned and then ESB will break the line. There is expected to be minimal impact on the land and all proposed works will be included in the proposed development should that option be selected.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to have due regard to the nature, scale and extent of the proposed works when defining the zone of influence for Appropriate Assessment and noted that if a Natura Impact Statement is required, to make sure the cumulative impacts include the solar farm.
- 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.

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 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