



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-319735-24

Case Reference / Description	ABP-319735-24		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	04/07/2024	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	12:00 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Pauline Fitzpatrick, Senior Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Heather McMeel, Senior Planner
Robert O'Toole, Lead Design Engineer
Daniel Nolan, Engineer

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 16th of May 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 proposed project entails the development of a new 110kV, 38kV/MV electrical substation and all associated developments. The site location is accessed via the IDA Business and Technology Park on Donore Road in Drogheda. It has an approx. area of 1.6 hectares. The boundaries to the south and west are delineated by trees and vegetation. There are housing estates c.250 metres to the north and east, the project aims to mitigate the visual impact for these estates by planting along the northern and eastern boundaries.

The substation would provide for a 110kV GIS building, a 38kV GIS building and transformers within a compound of approx. 5625 sq. m. The purpose for the substation is to add capacity and improve the distribution security of supply for the greater Drogheda area. Drybridge 110kV Station is the main source of supply to all 38kV stations in Drogheda Town and suburban locations. The existing two 110/38kV transformers in Drybridge are capacity restricted. In addition, the 38kV loop that feeds Rathmullan Station is overloaded, and it is necessary to take load off the existing 38kV loop and Drybridge 110kV station.

ESB is seeking confirmation from An Bord Pleanála as to whether the proposed development constitutes SID. ESB states that the proposed development would form part of the distribution rather than the transmission infrastructure. The proposed Donore Road Station will be the primary distribution substation for the urban and suburban areas of Drogheda town, providing much needed capacity and security of supply. The purpose of the proposed substation is not to divert power in and out of the substation, but to simply take power in a one direction from the passing 110kV transmission line indirectly via the Oldbridge 110kV substation and divert it to the lower voltage 38kV network so it can be distributed to customers. Given its nature and function and the fact that the proposed development is required to facilitate upgrades of the distribution network, connecting to same by being tail fed from an existing 110kV substation, ESB is of the opinion that the proposed project is not SID.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives began the discussion by enquiring about the customer connection between the existing and proposed substations. The prospective applicant replied that the Oldbridge Substation which was connected in 2023 serves the adjacent Amazon Datacentre. This would continue in addition to serving the proposed Donore Road 110/38kV & MV substation.
- The Board's representative followed up by enquiring about the type of connection and the overall output. The prospective applicant replied that an 110kV underground cable approx. 150 metres in length is proposed to connect the existing and proposed substations. The prospective applicant advised that there would be no physical separation between the 110kV and 38kV apparatus within the proposed substation compound.
- The prospective applicant was asked who will be operating the proposed substation and if there were any other similar arrangements or examples that the Board could look at. The prospective applicants replied that the ESB will be operating the proposed substation, and that they would have a look for similar examples which could be referred to the Board.
- The Board's representative commented that up to 2/3 years ago a distinction was made between tail-fed and loop in connections. The Board's representatives noted however that it is the definitions in the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended against which the proposed development must be assessed.
- The prospective applicant was asked to explain the equipment, and the 110kV underground connection between the proposed and existing substations. The prospective applicant mentioned the discrepancy in language used and that the 110kV cable is no different from any other. The prospective applicant stated that in their opinion it is how the 110kV cable and apparatus is used which is of importance. It facilitates a stepping down to 38kV and MV with no 110kV leaving the substation. The prospective applicant noted that there has been rapid growth in the town with 500ha zoned for residential purposes, with potential for 20,000 housing units. Such growth would need to be accommodated and the proposed development is the only way to do this.

- The Board's representatives stated that they accept the need for the proposed development as put forward by the prospective applicant but that this was separate from the consideration as to whether the proposed development was or was not SID under the provisions of s.182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- The prospective applicant notes that a distinction between electricity distribution and transmission is made in the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 (as amended). The Board's representative advised that it is the wording in the Planning and Development Act which the Board will consider.
- The Board's representatives highlighted matters that will be required to be addressed should an application be made including access and traffic, impact on residential and visual amenities and AA.

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.



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning