



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Record of Meeting ABP-319879-24

Case Reference / Description	Proposed construction of a 220kV Gas Insulated Switchgear Substation, 8 Transformer Bays & Site Infrastructure.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	22/08/2024	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	11:30am

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Una Crosse (Assistant Planning Director) Chair
David Ryan (Senior Planning Inspector)
Ellen Moss (Executive Officer)
Jonathan Dunne (Administration Assistant)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
1. Sinead Fox, Microsoft
2. Matt Ibbotson, Microsoft
3. Ann O'Dwyer, Microsoft
4. Gerard Cleary, Microsoft
5. Alan Kellett, Microsoft
6. Deirdre Gorman, Microsoft
7. Pauraic Matthews, CSEA
8. Robert Thorogood, HDR
9. Anthony Marston, Marston Planning
10. Eoin Dineen, Henry J Lyons

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 07th June 2024, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182A 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 briefly discussing the proposed development. The function of the proposed development is to support the demand for the proposed development of 3 number data centres, a back-up power generation plant and associated elements with a gross floor area of c. 150,000sqm that will be made to Kildare County Council in 2025 on an overall landholding of circa 106 hectares at Jigginstown, Naas, Co. Kildare. The proposed 220kV GIS substation compound is located to the southwest of the proposed data centre campus. The proposed development would include 220 kilovolt GIS Substation, 8 number transformer bays, and associated compounds and infrastructure.

The prospective applicant provided information on the concurrent data centre application which would include attenuation ponds and access via a new road from the Naas Southern Ring Road (R447), construction of back-up power generation facility to provide back-up to the proposed local grid and data centre development via the substation that forms the subject of this pre-application consultation.

The prospective applicant provided information about the stakeholders. ESO is responsible for operating and developing the national high-voltage grid in Ireland, ESB Networks (Asset Owner) is responsible for carrying out maintenance, repairs, and construction on the grid, and Microsoft Ireland Ltd. is responsible for acting as the developer for this project.

The prospective applicant will be responsible for the design, construction and pre-commissioning of the proposed 220kV GIS Substation and the 2 number underground single circuit 220kV transmission lines that will tie into the Dunstown 220/440 kilovolt substation to the south. Upon completion of the works by the prospective applicant, the proposed 220kV GIS Substation and 2 number underground single circuit 220kV transmission lines will be handed over to EirGrid, who, in conjunction with ESB Networks (ESBN), will carry out the final commissioning and energisation of the proposed development. Once energised the proposed development will form part of the ESBN infrastructure, which Eirgrid will be responsible for operating

The prospective applicant provided information regarding the ongoing route selection. Due to land ownership and existing infrastructure, a number of alternative route solutions are being examined. The prospective applicant advised that letters of consent from all parties will be provided as part of any future application.

The prospective applicant concluded their application by stating that the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure for the purpose of electricity transmission, pursuant to Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as the transmission lines and substation, whether considered independently or collectively, will form part of the transmission network and has the potential to form a node on the network.

Discussion

- The Boards representative began the discussion by emphasising the need to ensure that all environmental assessments are robust and consider all potential effects including cumulative and in-combination.
- The Boards representative queried whether the prospective applicant has considered the potential impacts of the proposal in respect of cultural heritage with monuments close to grid routes. The prospective applicant advised that they have completed some preliminary archaeological investigations.
- The Boards representatives emphasised the need to undertake a robust AA screening exercise to inform if AA Stage 2 is required. The prospective applicant advised that their findings in relation to the Habitats Directive will be presented in any future application.
- The prospective applicant queried timelines relating to the process. The Boards representatives advised that once the record of this meeting is received, it is then open to the prospective applicant to request a closure request. A recommendation would then be made to the Board, but ultimately, it is the Board that makes the determination and it was advised that the Board are expeditiously working through cases.

- The prospective applicant advised that it is the intention to make two applications concurrently and queried if the Board would assess the two applications concurrently, given the nature of data centres. The Boards representatives advised that, if feasible in terms of timelines the proposed development and any potential appeal could be assessed together, but such logistics are outside the control of the Board at this time.

The Boards representatives gave their preliminary opinion that the proposed development is strategic infrastructure development, falling within the scope of S.182A(1), but reminded the prospective applicant that the final determination lies with 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.

The Meeting concluded at 11.30am.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Una Crosse', is written over a horizontal line.

Una Crosse

Assistant Director of Planning