



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP 300928-18

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<b>Development</b>	110kV gas insulated switchgear (GIS) electrical substation and associated works at the existing 110kV Kilbarry substation.
<b>Location</b>	Old Whitechurch Road, Cork
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Cork City Council
<b>Prospective Applicant</b>	Eirgrid plc.
<b>Type of Request</b>	Section 182E request for SID Pre-application consultation – whether project is or is not strategic infrastructure development.
<b>Inspector</b>	Pauline Fitzpatrick

## 1.0 Proposed Development

The existing 110kV Kilbarry Electrical Substation is located on the Old Whitechurch Road approx. 3.2km to the north of Cork City Centre.

Eirgrid propose:

- New gas insulated switchgear (GIS) electrical substation within the existing Kilbarry 110kV air insulated switchgear (AIS) electrical substation compound. It would measure approx. 15 metres in height with an area of approx. 700 sq.m. A photograph of a typical GIS substation provided in support.
- Transfer of 4 no. existing 110kV circuits from the existing AIS substation to the proposed GIS substation.
- Demolition of existing unused control room to accommodate the proposed GIS Electrical Substation.
- Associated and ancillary development and site works including provision and/or replacement of electrical equipment, drainage works, laying of new or replacement cables and the diversion of existing cables

The proposed development will be subject to detailed design prior to lodging of a planning application. An initial site layout is proposed.

The existing Kilbarry 110kV AIS substation is a key node on the transmission and distribution network connecting seven 110kV lines and supplying load to Cork City and surrounding areas. There is a requirement for two additional transformers at the station due to the increasing demand in the north Cork City area. There are no bays available to accommodate the transformers at the existing AIS substation. An assessment of the station and surrounding network found that a new 110kV GIS substation located within the existing AIS substation compound is the most suitable option to facilitate the two transformers.

The existing AIS equipment will remain operational following the construction of the proposed development and will operate simultaneously with four of the seven circuits transferred to the proposed GIS substation. Some apparatus may be decommissioned following completion of the transfer. The proposal will have the added benefit of ensuring the substation remains a robust node in the electricity

transmission network and will contribute to the strengthening of the overall meshed grid providing a more secure and reliable system. It is also of importance to ensure security of supply is maintained to Cork City and surrounding areas.

## 2.0 Applicant's case

Development is not considered to be strategic infrastructure for the following reasons:

- While of considerable benefit to the network from a technical perspective, from a planning perspective the development is essentially an enhancement of existing substation infrastructure predicated by the requirement to connect two additional 110kV transformers to the network and the lack of spare bays in the existing AIS station.
- Given its nature, function and scale it is not, of itself, of strategic importance to the State or region. Nor does it meet any other provisions for SID set out in Section 37A(2) of the Act.
- The Board decided that comparable developments were not strategic infrastructure. Case references VC0040, VC0055, VC0061, VC0101 and VC110 cited.
- Eirgrid's preliminary view is that neither appropriate assessment nor environmental impact assessment is required for the proposed development.

## 3.0 Legal Provisions

Under section 182A(1) of the 2000 Act (inserted by section 4 of the 2006 Act) where a person (thereafter referred to as the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182B as 'proposed development'), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 9 states that

In this section 'transmission' in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 but, for the

purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of

(a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or

(b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.

In section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, “transmission” is defined in relation to electricity as meaning

the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board.

#### **4.0 Assessment**

The Board will note previous decisions it has made on SI pre application consultation requests in relation to electricity transmission infrastructure under S.182E involving amendments, additions and expansion of electricity substation infrastructure, including those cases referred to by the prospective applicant which I consider to be relevant. In these cases, due to lack of clarity in the interpretation of S.182A and its requirements regarding developments of such a nature the Board has exercised some discretion and used the broad definition of the SI Act, “developments of strategic importance to the State”, and the criteria contained in s.37(A)(2) to determine such matters (although not specifically cited in regard to cases coming forward under s. 182A).

In this case a new GIS substation and ancillary works are being proposed within the context of the existing substation infrastructure. A need, precedent and role for the presence of a substation in the location are well established. The stated purpose for the proposed works, namely to accommodate two additional transformers at the

station due to increasing demand in the north Cork City Area thereby contributing to the strengthening of the overall meshed grid and providing for a more secure and reliable system, might be considered of some strategic importance. In addition, the Board should also note the statement in Eirgrid's new Grid Development Strategy to optimise the existing grid which puts the upgrading of such facilities clearly in a more strategic planning context.

- 4.1. Notwithstanding having regard to the stated purpose, nature and scale of the proposed development and location within the existing substation compound, to the stated purpose of the 2006 Act as set out in the long title and to the general description and scale of strategic infrastructure development set out in section 37A(2), I conclude that the proposed development consisting of the construction of a proposed 110kV gas insulated switchgear (GIS) substation and associated works at the existing 110kV substation at Kilbarry, Old Whitechurch Road Cork, does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

## 5.0 Recommendation

I recommend that Eirgrid plc. be informed that the proposed development consisting of a new 110kV gas insulated switchgear (GIS) substation and ancillary works within the existing Kilbarry 110kV electricity substation site compound, Old Whitechurch Road, Cork as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made in the first instance to Cork City Council.

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**Pauline Fitzpatrick**  
**Senior Planning Inspector**

**April, 2018**