



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-301023-18

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Development</b>                  | 10 year permission for Solar PV Development with maximum export capacity of 51 MW.  |
| <b>Location</b>                     | Fidorfe, Grange and part of Rathoath Manor, Co. Meath.  |
| <b>Planning Authority</b>           | Meath County Council  |
| <b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b> | RA/170644   |
| <b>Applicant(s)</b>                 | JMB Solar Developments Ltd.   |
| <b>Type of Application</b>          | Permission.   |
| <b>Planning Authority Decision</b>  | Grant Permission.   |
| <b>Type of Appeal</b>               | Third Party   |
| <b>Appellant(s)</b>                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Padraig Kehoe.</li><li>2. Derek Coyle.</li><li>3. Thomas Martin.</li><li>4. Kevin Mulligan.</li><li>5. Matt Mohan &amp; Others C/O David Mulcahy Planning Consultants.</li></ol> |
| <b>Observer(s)</b>                  | John Purcell.   |

**Date of Site Inspection**

4<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

**Inspector**

Karen Kenny

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1.0 Site Location and Description .....  | 5  |
| 2.0 Proposed Development .....   | 5  |
| 3.0 Planning Authority Decision.....   | 7  |
| 3.1. Decision .....  | 7  |
| 3.2. Planning Authority Reports .....  | 7  |
| 3.3. Prescribed Bodies.....  | 8  |
| 3.4. Third Party Observations .....  | 8  |
| 4.0 Planning History.....  | 9  |
| 5.0 Policy Context.....  | 11 |
| 5.1. European Policy .....   | 11 |
| 5.2. Irish Energy Policy .....   | 11 |
| 5.3. National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 .....                   | 12 |
| 5.4. National Planning Framework (NPF), Government of Ireland, 2018 .....      | 12 |
| 5.5. Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2010-2022 ..... | 13 |
| 5.6. Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.....                              | 13 |
| 5.7. Natural Heritage Designations .....                                       | 16 |
| 5.8. Cultural Heritage Designations.....                                       | 16 |
| 6.0 The Appeal .....   | 16 |
| 6.1. Grounds of Appeal .....   | 16 |
| 6.2. Applicant Response .....  | 18 |
| 6.3. Planning Authority Response.....  | 22 |
| 6.4. Observations.....   | 22 |
| 6.5. Further Responses.....  | 23 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 7.0 Assessment.....                         | 23 |
| 7.2. Principle of Development .....         | 23 |
| 7.3. Landscape and Visual Impact .....      | 25 |
| 7.4. Glint and Glare .....                  | 27 |
| 7.5. Architectural Heritage.....            | 29 |
| 7.6. Access and Traffic.....                | 29 |
| 7.7. Archaeology .....                      | 30 |
| 7.8. Flood Risk .....                       | 31 |
| 7.9. Other Issues.....                      | 32 |
| Ecology.....                                | 32 |
| Grid Connection.....                        | 32 |
| 7.10. Appropriate Assessment Screening..... | 33 |
| 7.11. Environmental Impact Assessment.....  | 34 |
| 8.0 Recommendation.....                     | 35 |
| 9.0 Reasons and Considerations.....         | 35 |

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is located in the rural townlands of Fidorfe, Grange and Part of Ratoath Manor in County Meath. The site is situated 1.5 kilometres north of Kilbride (approx.), 4 kilometres southwest of Ashbourne (approx.) and 4.5 kilometres southeast of Ratoath (approx.). The Ratoath to Kilbride Road (L1007) runs to the immediate east of the site, while a narrow local road (L5021) runs in an east - west direction through the central area of the site. The area is characterised by open agricultural fields, traditional farmsteads and one-off houses dispersed along the local road network.
- 1.2. The site has a stated area of 95.3 hectares and the proposed development is contained within a stated area of 85.3 hectares. The site comprises five agricultural fields that are bounded by a combination of low grassed ditches, hedgerows and mature trees. The northern section of the site is bisected by a watercourse. A cottage and a cluster of farm buildings that are located centrally within the site area are excluded from the site. Grange Cottage, to the immediate north of the site, is listed on the Record of Protected Structures (MH045-104). An overhead 110kV power line runs northwest to southeast over the southwestern corner of the site.
- 1.3. Historic mapping indicates that the site was formally made up of multiple smaller fields, which have been merged. This, coupled with the low ditches that form the boundary between the site and the adjoining public roads, has created an open landscape character that is evident when travelling along the road network.
- 1.4. The lands are accessed from the L5021, a narrow local road that bisects the site and from the Kilbride Road (L1007).

## 2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Permission is sought for the construction of a Solar PV Energy Development comprising Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels on ground mounted support structures; underground cabling and ducting; 24 no. inverter/transformer stations; 24 no. HV Cabins; 2 no. electricity control buildings; 1 no. communications cabin; perimeter

fencing; CCTV cameras; site access tracks; landscaping; and all associated site development works.

2.2. Permission is sought for a 10 year period and for an operational life of up to 30 years.

2.3. The planning application was accompanied by the following:

- Planning and Environmental Report
- Ecological Impact Assessment and AA Screening Statement
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening
- Noise Observation Report
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Photomontage Booklet
- Glint and Glare Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan

2.4. Revised details submitted at further information stage included alterations to the proposed development. Alterations included the omission of a proposed walking route along the site perimeter and the omission of solar arrays in proximity to Grange Cottage, a Protected Structure. The further information was deemed significant and was re-advertised.

2.5. The grid connection is not part of this application. The submitted details state that the grid connection is expected to be via the existing ESB 220 kV substation at Corduff, which is approximately 6 kilometres south of the site. Alternatively, the grid connection may be to the Corduff – Platin overhead 110 kV line via an offsite substation at a location approximately 3 kilometres southeast of the site.

## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

### 3.1. Decision

Grant permission subject to 13 no. conditions. The following conditions are of note:

C-2: Hedgerow survey report to be submitted to confirm that mitigation measures detailed in drawing LMP01 have been achieved prior to any PV panel arriving on site.

C-3: Long term landscaping maintenance and management plan to be submitted for agreement to ensure that hedgerows are maintained at the required heights.

C-4: Ecological avoidance measures to be implemented in full.

C-8: All structures to be removed off site no later than 25 years from the date of commencement of the development;

C-10: Fencing panels to be raised from ground level to allow wildlife (inc. badgers) to continue to have access through the site.

C-12: Archaeological pre-testing.

### 3.2. Planning Authority Reports

#### 3.2.1. Planning Reports

3.2.2. Following an initial assessment further information was requested in relation to landscape and visual impacts, glint and glare impacts at Dublin Airport, impact on Grange Cottage a Protected Structure, river buffer and proposed greenway around the perimeter of the site, road condition, screening and impact on residential amenity. The Planning Officer's Report following the submission of further information concludes that having regard to the suitability of the site from a technical perspective, together with the nature and scale of the development, that the proposed development would be acceptable.

#### 3.2.3. Other Technical Reports

Conservation Officer: No objection.

Transportation Section: No objection, subject to road condition survey.

### 3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- Inland Fisheries Ireland: No objection. Report recommends that an undisturbed buffer of 10 metres (min) be provided between the development area and the river bank and that discharges should comply with European Communities (Surface Water) Regulations 2009 and European Communities (Groundwater) Regulations 2010.
- Irish Aviation Authority: Report recommends that potential glare and glint issues in relation to Aviation at Dublin Airport are assessed using the USA Federal Aviation Administration Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool.
- Dublin Airport Authority: A report received at further information stage states that the glint and glare analysis uses a Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool and has regard to Federal Aviation Authority recommendations. Analysis shows no effects on approach pathways and Air Traffic Control Towers following implementation of the mitigation landscaping plan. Recommended that works to install PV panels should not commence until screen planting reaches the heights specified in the landscape mitigation plan (as modelled). A Hedgerow Survey Report should be submitted for the written approval of the PA in advance of PV panel installation. A long-term Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan should be prepared and submitted to the PA for agreement.

### 3.4. Third Party Observations

- 3.4.1. Observations were received from a total of 39 no. individuals / groups of individuals and considered by the Planning Authority. The issues raised are similar to those raised in the grounds of appeal as set out below.



## 4.0 Planning History

- 4.1.1. The planning history associated with the area is set out in the Planning Authority's report. There is no recent planning history pertaining to the appeal site, however, the following relate to recent applications in the immediate vicinity.

**P.A. Ref, AA151319:** Application for dwelling on site to the east of the appeal site. Permission granted.

**P.A. Ref. AA160602:** Application for dwelling on site to the east of the appeal site. Permission granted.

### 4.1.2. Similar Developments in County Meath

The Board may wish to note solar farm applications in County Meath which have been decided by the Board or are currently on appeal.

**ABP Ref. ABP-301990-18 / P.A. Ref. AA/180383:**

Application for 8.7 MW solar farm on a site of c. 55 hectares at Irishtown Kilbrew, Co. Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision is the subject of a third-party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. A decision in respect of this appeal is pending.

**ABP Ref. ABP-301151-18 / P.A. Ref. RA/170479:**

Application for 31.5 MW solar farm on a site of c. 55 hectares at Harlockstown, Ashbourne, Co. Meath. This site is situated c. 2.8 kilometres to the north of the appeal site. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision is the subject of a third-party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. A decision in respect of this appeal is pending.

**ABP Ref. ABP-301049-18 / AA/170860:**

Application for permission for 35 MW solar farm on a 56.76-hectare site at Reask, Ashbourne, Co. Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision is the subject of a third party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. A decision in respect of this appeal is pending.

**ABP Ref. PL17.248939 / P.A. Ref. LB/170509:**

Application for 5 MW solar farm on a site of 11 hectares at Grangegeeth, Slane, Co. Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This

decision was subject to a third party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. An Bord Pleanála upheld the decision of Meath County Council and granted planning permission.

**ABP Ref. PL17.248823 / P.A. Ref. AA/161238:**

Application for 12.5 MW solar farm on a site of 20.21 hectares at Irishtown, Kilbrew, Co. Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision was subject to third party appeals to An Bord Pleanála. An Bord Pleanála overturned the decision of Meath County Council and refused planning permission for one reason. The reason for refusal states that the development would have a visual impact on the landscape and would materially and adversely affect the character and setting of a Recorded Monument.

**ABP Ref. PL17.248146 / P.A. Ref. LB/170509:**

Application for 60MW to 75MW solar farm on a site of 150.29 hectares at Garballagh, Thomastown, Gillinstown, Downestown, Duleek, Co. Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision was subject to a third-party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. A decision in respect of this appeal is pending.

**ABP PL17.248028 / P.A. Ref. LA/160998:**

Application for 20 MW solar farm on a site of 42.6 hectares at Julianstown East and West, and Ninch, County Meath. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development. This decision was subject to a third-party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. An Bord Pleanála upheld the decision of Meath County Council and granted planning permission.

- 4.1.3. The Board may wish to note other solar farm applications in proximity to the site that have been decided by Meath County Council and have not been the subject of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála.

**P.A. Ref. RA/170873:**

Application for 55 MW solar farm on a site of c. 129 hectares at Vesignstown, Polleban and Harlockstown, Dunboyne, Co. Meath. This site is situated c. 7 kilometres to the west of the appeal site. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development.

**P.A. Ref. AA/170600:**

Application for 43 MW solar farm on a site of c. 75 hectares at Ballymacarney and Part of Baytown, The Ward, Co. Meath. This site is situated c. 3.8 kilometres to the north of the appeal site. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development.

**P.A. Ref. AA/161441:**

Application for 20 MW solar farm on a site of 52 hectares at Doghtog, Crakenstown and Bodeen, Ratoath, Co. Meath. This site is situated c. 7 kilometres to the north of the appeal site. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development.

**P.A. Ref. AA/160553:**

Application for 10 MW solar farm on a site of c. 17 hectares at Bullstown, Donaghmore, Ashbourne, Co. Meath. This site is situated c. 3.7 kilometres to the north east of the appeal site. The Planning Authority granted permission for the development.

## **5.0 Policy Context**

### **5.1. European Policy**

- 5.1.1. EU Directive 2009/28/EC – Energy from Renewable Resources sets a target of 20% of EU energy consumption from renewable sources and a 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. As part of this Directive, Ireland’s legally binding target is 16% energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland has set a non-legally binding target of 40% of renewable energy share for electricity by 2020 (from a 2012 position of 19.6%).

### **5.2. Irish Energy Policy**

- 5.2.1. **Ireland’s Transition to a low carbon Energy Future 2015-2030.** This white paper on energy policy (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources – Dec 2015) provides a complete energy policy update for Ireland. It sets out a vision to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by between 80% and 95% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, falling to zero or below by 2100. The policy document recognises that solar photovoltaic (PV) technology is rapidly becoming cost

competitive for electricity generation and that the deployment of solar power in Ireland has the potential to increase energy security, contribute to our renewable energy targets and support economic growth and jobs.

5.2.2. **Strategy for Renewable Energy, 2012 – 2020.** This Strategy reiterates the Government’s position that ‘the development and deployment of Ireland’s abundant indigenous renewable energy resources, both onshore and offshore, clearly stands on its own merits in terms of the contribution to the economy, to the growth and jobs agenda, to environmental sustainability and to diversity of energy supply’.

5.2.3. **National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP).** The NREAP was submitted to the European Commission in 2010. It sets out Ireland’s approach to achieving its legally binding targets, with a target of 40% of electricity consumption to be from renewable sources by 2020. A forth progress report on the NREAP was submitted to the European commission in February 2018 which detailed the installed capacity of solar power in electricity generation of 5.93 MW.

### 5.3. **National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025**

5.3.1. The National Landscape Strategy was published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in June 2015. It is an objective of the strategy to implement the European Landscape Convention by integrating landscape into our approach to sustainable development. The strategy aims to provide a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape.

### 5.4. **National Planning Framework (NPF), Government of Ireland, 2018**

5.4.1. The National Planning Framework (NPF), 2018 replaces the National Spatial Strategy as the overarching national planning policy document. The transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society is one of ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO’s) for the NPF. The framework notes that in the energy sector, transitioning to a low carbon economy from renewable sources of energy is an integral part of Ireland’s climate change strategy. National Policy Objective no. 55 is “to promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment”. Section 5.4 which relates to ‘Planning and Investment to

Support Rural Jobs', states that in meeting the challenge of transitioning to a low carbon economy, the location of future national renewable energy generation will, for the most part, need to be accommodated on large tracts of land that are located in a rural setting, while also continuing to protect the integrity of the environment and respecting the needs of people who live in rural areas.

## 5.5. Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2010-2022

### 5.5.1. Strategic Recommendations:

**PIR26:** Development Plans and Local Authorities support, through policies and plans, the targets for renewable generation so that renewable energy targets for 2020, and any further targets beyond 2020 which become applicable over the duration of the RPGs, are met.

**PIR27:** That low carbon sustainable renewable energy systems, bio-energy and energy conservation potentials are exploited to their full potential through the advancement of EU and national policy at regional level and the promotion of existing and emerging green technologies.

### 5.5.2. Strategic Policy:

**PIP4:** That the ICT and energy needs of the GDA shall be delivered through the lifespan of the RPGs by way of investment in new projects and corridors to allow economic and community needs to be met, and to facilitate sustainable development and growth to achieve a strong and successful international GDA Gateway.

## 5.6. Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

5.6.1. The Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 is the relevant statutory plan for the area. The site is located in a rural area and is not subject to a land use zoning objective. The following policies and objectives are considered to be relevant.

### **Strategic Planning Approach - Core Principle 8:**

To support agriculture and agricultural related development in Meath and strengthen the county as a hub for the vibrant agricultural and food sectors.

## **Chapter 8 - Energy and Communications**

- EC POL 1: To facilitate energy infrastructure provision, including the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, so as to provide for the further physical and economic development of Meath.
- EC POL 2: To support international, national and county initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources which makes use of the natural resources of the county in an environmentally acceptable manner, where it is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- EC POL 3: To encourage the production of energy from renewable sources, such as from biomass, waste material, solar, wave, hydro, geothermal and wind energy, subject to normal proper planning considerations, including in particular, the potential impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity and Natura 2000 sites.
- EC POL 4: To support the National Climate Change Strategy and, in general, to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases;
- EC OBJ 3: To investigate the preparation of a renewable energy strategy promoting technologies which are most viable in County Meath.
- Section 8.1.3 - Renewable Energy: Meath County Council is committed to developing a more diverse range and combination of energy sources including wind energy, micro hydro power, solar energy, biofuels, geothermal (deep and shallow), anaerobic digestion and combined heat and power in order to deliver on the targets set down in the National Renewable Energy Action Plan Ireland.

#### **Chapter 4 – Economic Development Strategy**

- ED POL 19 – To recognise the contribution of rural employment to the overall growth of the economy and to promote this growth by encouraging rural enterprise and diversification generally and to promote certain types of rural enterprises, especially those activities which are rural resource dependent, including renewable energy production, food production / processing and the extractive industries.

### **Section 9.8.6 - Landscape Capacity**

- LC OBJ 1: To seek to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of all landscape character types, and to maintain the visual integrity of areas of exceptional value and high sensitivity.

**Section 11.15.1 Renewable Energy Developments:** In the assessment of individual proposals, Meath County Council will take the following into account:

- the proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
  - the environmental and social impacts of the proposed development, including residential amenity and human health;
  - impact of the development on the landscape;
  - impact on public rights of way and walking routes;
  - connection to the National Grid (where applicable);
  - mitigation features, where impacts are inevitable, and;
  - protected or designated areas - NHAs, SPAs and SACs, areas of archaeological potential and scenic importance, proximity to structures that are listed for protection, national monuments, etc.
- Section 4.4.2 (Biofuels and Renewable Energy) recognises renewable energy generation as a growing sustainable industry that can supplement the development of the rural economy of Meath.
  - ED POL 5: To recognise the contribution of rural employment to the continued and sustainable growth of the economy and to promote this continued growth by encouraging rural enterprise generally, especially those activities that are resource dependent, including energy production, extractive industry, small scale industry and tourism in a sustainable manner and at appropriate locations.

### **Appendix 7 - Landscape Character Assessment**

The appeal site is located in landscape character area No.10 – The Ward Lowlands which is designated as a ‘low value’ landscape of ‘high sensitivity’.

### **Appendix 12 – Views and Prospects**

There are no protected views or prospects detailed on Map 9.5.1 of the Development Plan that relate to the appeal site.

## **5.7. Natural Heritage Designations**

5.7.1. The appeal site is not located in or adjacent to any designated Natura 2000 sites, Natural Heritage Areas or proposed Natural Heritage Areas.

## **5.8. Cultural Heritage Designations**

5.8.1. Recorded Monument ME045-019, a recorded field system, is located in the mid-western section of the site.

## **6.0 The Appeal**

### **6.1. Grounds of Appeal**

6.1.1. A total of 5 no. third party appeals have been received from residents of the area. The issues raised are generally similar and as such I have summarised the issues together. The grounds of appeal are summarised as follows:

- Development premature pending the preparation of national guidance / policy and should be refused. Reference to precedent of previous ABP decisions (e.g. PL26.247217 and PL26.247780).
- Location of the site within a rural community is unsuitable for a Solar PV development and contrary to Development Plan policy.
- Impact on landscape character and rural setting arising from the scale of development proposed. The development will be a dominant feature in the landscape.
- Impact on visual amenity when viewed from dwellings and from the local road network. Noted that the proposed screen planting includes native deciduous species, which will have no screening impact for a large portion of the year.
- Impact on recreational amenity. Local Roads provide an amenity for locals and visitors for activities such as walking, running and cycling due to the rural setting and views across the site, which would be lost.



- Cumulative impact of proposed solar farm developments in the area. 4 no. solar farms proposed within a c. 3-km radius.
- Health Impacts. Local residents suffer from conditions that would be exasperated by noise, glare and electromagnetic activity.
- Impact of glint and glare and noise on horses and impacts on riders using local roads during the construction phase.
- Flood risk is not adequately addressed. There is an established flood risk associated with the stream running through and along the boundary of the site. UK based research suggests that solar panels generate run-off above the greenfield situation as it cannot be assumed that rain falling on a row of solar panels would flow evenly into the rain shadow of the row below, and have the same percentage of ground for infiltration as the pre-development situation. It is suggested that run off may form rivulets flowing between the panels, thus increasing the amount of water runoff. It is suggested that physical structures in flood risk areas could be dislodged during a flood event and become an obstacle in the event of a flood event, catching debris and increasing the level of flooding.
- Impact on local road network. The local road network is characterised by narrow, single carriageway roads that would not cater for traffic during the construction phase. The Kilbride Road is a busy commuter route. The traffic counts do not accurately reflect traffic volumes in the area as they were not carried out at peak traffic times. Proposed mitigation planting has the potential to block sight lines at the junction of the R5021 and L1007.
- Loss of agricultural land and commercialisation / industrialisation of the landscape. The development represents a form of development that is alien to the existing rural landscape, field patterns and rural character.
- Impact on residential amenity and quality of life.
- Devaluation of property values.
- Noise impacts.
- Impact on Kilbride Village and its environs.

- Concerns in relation to decommissioning and reinstatement.
- Impacts associated with grid connection.
- Lack of consultation.
- Contrary to core principles, policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan, including provisions in relation to local job creation.
- Inaccuracies / inconsistencies in the submitted technical information. Height of panels referenced in glint and glare study conflicts with that referenced in planning and environmental report. There are discrepancies in relation to road widths and the presence of lay-by's. Noise study flawed as those who conducted it are not accredited. Ecological Impact Assessment lacks appropriate level of survey and fails to recognise key species that are present in the area.
- Impacts on setting of Protected Structure.
- Impact on archaeological features within the site.

## 6.2. Applicant Response

A response has been received from Tom Phillips and Associates, Town Planning Consultants on behalf of the applicant. The response items, that are relevant to the appeal, can be summarised as follows:

- Development is not premature. Policy framework at EU, National and Regional and Local level allows for determination of solar PV developments on a case by case basis. The Development Management Guidelines (S7.16.1) state that a refusal based upon prematurity is not appropriate where there are no proposals to remedy the deficiency. This reason can only be used if there is a realistic prospect of policy documents being completed within a specific timeframe (reference to *Element Power v ABP* (2017 IEHC 55) and *Highfield Solar v ABP* (2017 272 JR)).
- The site is suitable as it is free from environmental designations, is proximate to grid infrastructure and high demand electricity users, the majority of views can be screened and the area has a relatively high solar yield.

- The development can be absorbed into the landscape without significant impacts on the surrounding environment or residential amenity. Flat sites, can be readily screened due to the height of the panels above ground and the planting will reinforce existing hedgerows and provide additional planting. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) addresses visual impact and concludes that impacts are likely to be no greater than moderate to slight from selected locations in the immediate vicinity of the site and will generally dissipate within a short distance of the site perimeter. The Residential Amenity Study undertaken in response to the RFI considered dwellings within 1 kilometre of the site. There is no minimum setback standard from houses in Ireland, however, ABP have accepted a setback of 22 metres under ABP Ref. PL26.244351. In this instance a minimum setback of 50 metres is provided to all houses, with buffers increased further at certain locations. The dwelling positioned centrally within the site is surrounded by agricultural buildings to side / rear that are in the applicant's ownership. The main view from this dwelling is east along the road corridor. These views will be maintained without visibility of the proposed panels. Panels will be setback by nearly 100 metres from this dwelling.
- The planting will foreshorten some open views across this flat agricultural site. However, it is noted that these views arise from previous degrading and heavy management of hedgerow field boundaries and that it is a policy of the CDP (NH POL 13 and 14) to rectify this. Condition no. 2 and 3 of the notification to grant permission require a hedgerow survey, confirmation of mitigation measures contained in the Landscape Mitigation Plan and a long-term landscape maintenance and management plan. The applicant is happy to comply with these conditions. In relation to the use of deciduous hedgerows, it is council policy to use native species and the submitted photomontages represent the spring views with limited foliage. There is no requirement in the Landscape and Visual Assessment Guidelines (GLVIA 2013) to depict the development in different seasons.
- The low impact form of development respects prevailing field patterns and will not be at odds with the rural character of the area.

- The development is designed to allow for livestock grazing and can support agriculture and wildlife biodiversity. The dual use of land for agriculture and solar energy is a recognised form of agricultural diversification.
- Development Plan supports and facilitates renewable energy development at suitable locations and subject to normal planning considerations.
- The site is outside of the boundary of the Kilbride Local Area Plan and is not expected to result in any adverse impacts on the village and its environments.
- No evidence to suggest that the development will impact on property values (refer to ABP determination under ABP Ref. PL17.126307).
- An Architectural Impact Assessment relating to the adjoining protected structure, Grange Cottage - MH045-104, concludes that in light of existing and proposed screening around the structure, separation between installations and the structure, and the selected external colours for the plant and equipment, the proposed development would not have an adverse impact.
- The applicant confirms that following the 25-year lifespan of the project the site will be fully decommissioned.
- Transport impacts arising from the development have been assessed through a Transport Assessment and Construction Traffic Management Plan. The potential for impacts will occur for a short time during the construction period, and will be fully managed in accordance with an agreed Construction Traffic Management Plan. No impacts envisaged during the operational phase.
- No evidence of health and safety impacts. Publications 'Clean Energy Results – Ground Mounted Solar PV Systems' (June 2015) and ESB's 'Electric and Magnetic Fields in the Environment document' (June 1999) state that solar panels and associated infrastructure produce very low electromagnetic fields that deteriorate quickly over a short distance. Solar farms are passive installations that do not produce any harmful by-products. ABP have concurred with the available documentation on issues of impacts on public health, and have discounted health issues (e.g. ABP Ref. PL93.246902).

- Predicted noise levels at the closest noise sensitive locations are significantly below the threshold at which an adverse impact could be observed (32dB(A)).
- The Ecological Impact Assessment considers all matters relating to potential ecological impacts, including the potential impact on horses and birds as well as other biodiversity. Site walkovers included two visits to record the presence of wintering birds, in particular qualifying species of SPA sites in the wider area and to record the nature and suitability of the habitats for wintering birds as well as general breeding bird species. The nature and suitability of the land for breeding birds and wintering species was fully assessed over the course of four dedicated site walkovers. A detailed desktop survey was carried out looking at bird species recorded in the 10 kilometre Grid Square. The site is considered to be of Low – Moderate Value as it contains some semi-natural habitat and the development footprint will be confined to the agricultural fields, which are considered to be of low ecological value. There will be no permanent impacts on semi-natural habitats and the proposed landscaping includes hedgerow and riparian zone enhancement and the planting of wild grass and wildflower areas. There is no scientific basis provided for the contention that there will be an impact on the breeding of Swallows. The National Biodiversity Data Centre data provides access to detailed bird survey data collected as part of the national Bird Atlas, collected according to detailed methodology and is considered an appropriate data source. The potential for Bats was considered in the EclA and it was concluded that no impacts were expected. In relation to Red Kite it is noted that occasional sighting is to be expected in the area, but it was not recorded during the site walkovers. The proposed development is highly unlikely to adversely impact on the ongoing conservation programme relating to the reintroduction of Red Kite.
- Traffic, Noise, Ecology and Glint and Glare assessments demonstrate that the development will not result in any significant adverse impacts on the surrounding environment. There is no basis in relation to impacts on horses or on the local equine industry.
- No significant increase in runoff rates is expected. The panels are raised off the ground and there are at least 3 no. small gaps between each panel in

each frame. There are also gaps between each linear array. As the site is to remain grassed it is not anticipated that there would be a significant concentration of surface flow off site. The proposed use will reduce run off relative to the current tillage use, as the fields will have vegetation cover in winter and will not be traversed by heavy machinery.

- Other matters raised in the response include reference to consultation with local residents, a commitment to provide roof top solar installations to households in the immediate vicinity, and a commitment to an annual contribution to the local community and community initiatives.

### **6.3. Planning Authority Response**

The Planning Authority is satisfied that all matters outlined in the appeals were considered in the course of its assessment as detailed in the Planning Officer's Report.

### **6.4. Observations**

One observation has been received from an adjacent resident. The issues raised that are additional to those raised in the grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of consultation.
- Removal of proposed amenity walk.
- Failure to address connection to the national grid.
- Solar panels of 3 metres in height should be screened by a 3 metre high border, that is in keeping with existing farm borders before installation of any panels.
- Concerned that electromagnetic field will impact on utilities / services.
- Concerns in relation to flood risk to drainage ditch running through observer's residential property.

## 6.5. Further Responses

None.

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1.1. I consider that the key issues in determining the application and appeal before the Board are as follows:

- Principle of Development
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Glint and Glare Impact
- Impact on Architectural Heritage
- Access and Transport
- Archaeology
- Flood Risk
- Other Issues
- Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Environmental Impact Assessment

## 7.2. Principle of Development

7.2.1. Permission is sought for the construction of a Solar PV development over an area of c. 85 hectares. The appeal site is located in a rural area that is outside of a designated settlement.

7.2.2. The grounds of appeal argue that the development is premature due to the absence of national, regional and local policy guidance in relation to solar developments. The appeals refer to previous determinations by the Board that solar farm developments were premature, inter alia, pending the provision of policy guidance (ABP Ref. PL26.247217 and ABP Ref. PL26.247780). The grounds of appeal also argue that the location of the site within a rural community is unsuitable and contrary to the Development Plan.

- 7.2.3. The applicant's response argues that the proposed development is not premature as there is no policy or guidance in drafting and no timeframe for the completion of same. The response refers to the guidance contained in Section 7.16.1 of the Development Management Guidelines (DEHLG, 2007) which states that a development should only be refused on the grounds of prematurity where there is a reasonable prospect of a strategy or plan being completed within a reasonable timeframe. The response refers to recent legal determinations that address the issue of prematurity (*Element Power v ABP* and *Highfield Solar v ABP*). The response also argues that the Development Plan supports Solar PV developments at suitable locations and contends that the appeal site is a suitable site as it has no environmental designations, it is proximate to grid infrastructure, has a high solar yield and is close to high demand electricity users.
- 7.2.4. In terms of policy support, I would note that renewable energy developments are supported 'in principle' at a national, regional and local policy level, with collective support across government sectors for a move to a low carbon future and an acknowledgement of the need to encourage the use of renewable resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to meet renewable energy targets set at a European Level. The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018 is the overarching national planning policy document for Ireland. The NPF acknowledges that there is cross sectoral support for a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society and includes this as one of ten National Strategic Outcomes for the NPF. The NPF recognises that Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy requires a shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources. National Policy Objective No. 55 is "to promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment". Section 5.4, which relates to 'Rural Places', states that in meeting the challenge of transitioning to a low carbon economy, the location of future national renewable energy generation will, for the most part, need to be accommodated on large tracts of land that are located in a rural setting, while also continuing to protect the integrity of the environment and respecting the needs of people who live in rural areas.
- 7.2.5. The Meath County Development Plan also provides policy support for renewable energy development (EC POL 1 and EC POL 2). Policy EC POL 3 encourages the production of energy from renewable sources, subject to normal planning



considerations, including in particular, the potential impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity and Natura 2000 sites, while Economic Development Policies ED POL 19 and ED POL 5 seek to encourage rural enterprise and activities that are resource dependent such as energy production.

- 7.2.6. I am satisfied that the National Planning Framework and the Meath County Development Plan provide clear policy support for solar energy development and that both documents support renewable energy development within rural areas. While no technical guidance has been published for solar developments, I am of the view that the existing planning policy framework is sufficiently robust to facilitate the assessment of the subject application on its own merits and that the proposed development is not premature on this basis. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principle, in my view.

### **7.3. Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 7.3.1. The grounds of appeal argue that a solar development of the scale proposed would have a significant impact on the landscape and rural character of the area. The applicant's response states that the development can be assimilated into the landscape and that it is not expected to result in impacts of significance on the surrounding environment.
- 7.3.2. The Meath County Development Plan Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) places the site within 'The Ward Lowlands' (Area 10). This Landscape Character Area is designated as a 'low value' landscape of 'high sensitivity' and 'regional significance'<sup>1</sup>. The landscape is described as a large area of pasture and arable farmland. It is noted that the area is under significant development pressure and that the landscape has a degraded quality due to the lack of management and the loss of hedgerows and larger fields. It is an Objective of the Development Plan 'to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of all landscape character types, and to maintain the visual integrity of areas of exceptional value and high sensitivity' (LC OBJ 1). Map 4 of the LCA details the capacity of each area to accommodate development. The Ward Lowlands is deemed to have medium capacity for 'farm buildings', 'one off housing' and 'underground services', while it is deemed to have a low capacity to

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<sup>1</sup> The categories of importance are international, national, regional and local.

accommodate 'overhead cables, substations and masts', 'roads and railways', 'wind turbines' and 'biomass and forestry'. While solar panels are not listed, the capacity analysis indicates that this area is relatively sensitive to change and that it has a low capacity to absorb significant infrastructural installations. There are no other landscape designations, such as protected views or prospects, affecting the site.

7.3.3. The landscape in the immediate vicinity of the site has an open and low-lying character. The roadside boundaries comprise low ditches and hedgerow for the most part and there is limited visual containment or screening. This open character is apparent in the photomontage images submitted with the application. The application is accompanied by a 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (LVIA). The assessment is based on a modelled zone of theoretical visibility and viewpoint analysis. The modelled zone of theoretical visibility shows potential for visibility over 2-3 kilometres in an easterly and north westerly direction, with more sporadic visibility beyond this (Fig. 9 LVIA). When adjusted to take account of existing screening the theoretical zone of visibility is reduced to a more localised area (Fig. 10 LVIA). While the zone of theoretical visibility is further reduced when adjusted to take account of proposed landscaping, the development would remain visible from the roads and dwellings in the immediate vicinity (Fig. 14 LVIA). The potential visibility is exacerbated, in my view, by the fact that the site is split into two portions by a public road.

7.3.4. The applicant argues that the solar farm is a low impact form of development and that the development can be readily screened due to the height of the panels. While I accept that the panels have a low height above ground, the overall scale of the development is significant in the context of a landscape that comprises open agricultural fields and farm buildings and one-off houses of relatively modest scale. I would note that there is a heavy reliance on screen planting to mitigate visual impacts. While I accept the applicant's argument that views of the development would be relatively localised, the change resulting from the development (views of the solar panels, structures and screen planting) would be very noticeable locally and the magnitude of landscape change would be high. I am of the view that the Development Plan does not anticipate the level of landscape change associated with the development of a solar PV farm over an extensive area (c. 85 hectares) and that the sites location within a landscape of 'low' value does not remove the obligation to

protect the existing landscape character. Not only would the proposed development (panels, fencing and associated structures) constitute an alien form of development, the panels would give rise to a uniformity which is not characteristic of the area. I am of the opinion that the landscape at this location is not sufficiently robust to assimilate a development of the nature and scale proposed and that the development would have significant landscape and visual impacts locally. In conclusion, I submit that due to the scale of the development, coupled with the open landscape setting, that this form of development warrants a refusal of permission on the basis of landscape and visual impacts.

- 7.3.5. In relation to the potential for cumulative visual impacts I note the permitted development of solar energy development at sites that are 3 kilometres and over, from the subject site. At this distance, it is unlikely that there are places from which the permitted and proposed schemes would be visible and cumulative visual impacts are not likely. I support the conclusions of the applicant in this regard.

#### **7.4. Glint and Glare Impacts**

- 7.4.1. The grounds of appeal refer to the potential for glint and glare impacts from the proposed development. In broad terms, glint is produced as a direct reflection of the sun on a smooth surface, such as a solar panel, while glare is a more scattered reflection of light produced from a rougher surface and is less intense than glint. This is a relatively new planning consideration and I would note that there is no technical guidance in relation to this issue, nor has there been any practical experience in an Irish context.
- 7.4.2. The application is accompanied by a Glint and Glare Assessment that models the potential for reflection at residential properties and public roads in the vicinity of the site. An assessment of aviation impacts and a residential amenity study was submitted at further information stage.
- 7.4.3. The potential for reflectance on residential properties tends to occur in the early morning or evening periods during the March to September period and is relatively limited. The assessment concludes that mitigation screening would eliminate reflectance in most instances, and that any remaining impacts would be 'low to very low'. I consider this conclusion to be reasonable.

- 7.4.4. The assessment notes the potential for reflectance at Air Traffic Control Towers at Dublin Airport, but states that this can be mitigated through planting. A report from the Dublin Airport Authority, that was received by the Planning Authority at further information stage, indicates no objection to the development and recommends that conditions are attached in relation to the proposed mitigations measures.
- 7.4.5. There is potential for reflectance along several local roads in the vicinity of the site. The applicant argues that minor or fleeting reflectance is acceptable along minor local roads and I would accept this view. However, I would have concerns in relation to the extent of reflectance along the Kilbride Road. The assessment indicates potential for reflectance along the 850 metre stretch of road to the east of the site over a maximum window of 26 minutes per day between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.30 pm during the March to October period. The assessment states that once mitigation planting is established and maintained to a height of 3-4 metres, the reflectance will be eliminated. There is very little vegetative screening between this road and the appeal site at present and as such, the development would be entirely reliant on screen planting. While I would note that the duration of impact is relatively confined, the Kilbride Road is a busy local road<sup>2</sup> that runs parallel to the N2 and N4 and connects to Dublin. I am not satisfied that future screen planting would be sufficiently robust to exclude reflections onto this road. The planting will take time to establish and leaf cover will vary due to the deciduous nature of the proposed hedgerows. I am not satisfied, on the basis of the submitted information, that reflectance from the development would be eliminated and that the development would not distract road users on the Kilbride Road and impact on traffic safety along this busy county road. I recommend that, in addition to a substantive reason for refusal in relation to landscape and visual impacts (discussed in Section 7.3 above), that a second reason for refusal is warranted in relation to the potential impact on traffic safety.
- 7.4.6. Should the Board form a different view and grant permission for the proposed development, I recommend that a condition is included requiring detailed glint and glare surveys following commissioning and on an annual basis for a period of two years to be submitted to the planning authority in order to confirm that no glint or

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<sup>2</sup> Section 2.3 of the submitted Transport Assessment details two way traffic movements of 2,922 vehicles over a 24 hour survey period in February 2017.

glare impact has taken place, and to provide such further mitigation measures as the planning authority may specify in writing to ensure that no impacts arise. I would also recommend that development is phased, to ensure that mitigation planting has reached the screening height of 3 metres prior to any PV solar panels being installed on the site.

## **7.5. Impact on Architectural Heritage**

- 7.5.1. The grounds of appeal raise concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed development on Grange Cottage, a Protected Structure (RPS Ref. MH045-104). Grange Cottage is situated adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the site. The cottage is a single storey farm building with thatched roof and associated out buildings and boundary planting. The cottage is set back from the Kilbride Road. The revised site layout plan submitted to the Planning Authority at further information stage omits solar panels immediately south of the protected structure and seeks to maintain views of the structure from the Kilbride Road to the east. Having regard to the screen planting around the curtilage of the protected structure, the distance of the proposed installations from the protected structure and the protection of views from the Kilbride Road, I am of the view that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the character or immediate setting of the protected structure. While the wider landscape setting of Grange Cottage would be altered by the proposed development, I am satisfied that landscape impacts are adequately addressed in Section 7.3 above.

## **7.6. Access and Traffic**

- 7.6.1. The grounds of appeal refer to the impact of the proposed development on the local road network. It is argued that the local road network is characterised by narrow, single carriageway roads that would not cater for traffic during construction phase. It is also noted that the Kilbride Road is a busy commuter route. One appeal questions the accuracy of the traffic counts on the local road that bisects the site (L5021), as they were not carried out at peak traffic times.
- 7.6.2. The proposed development would be accessed from the local road that bisects the site (L5021) and from the Kilbride Road. The Construction Management Plan

submitted with the application states that a total of 1,333 HGV deliveries are expected over a 36-week construction period. A maximum of 12 two-way HGV deliveries per day are expected during the peak construction period (weeks 8-12) and it is stated that there would be up to 60 staff on site during the construction period, with an average of 35 workers over the 36-week construction period. Traffic movements during the operational phase would be confined to maintenance visits.

7.6.3. The main impacts from the proposed development will arise during the construction stage. It is clear that there would be a substantial increase in traffic on the local road network during the construction phase and that this may result in some disruption to local road users. However, I am satisfied that the impacts would be short-term in nature and that the safety and carrying capacity of the road network can be protected through traffic management. I am satisfied that there would be no significant impacts on the local road network arising from the operational phase of the development. I am also satisfied that sightlines at local road junctions would not be compromised as a result of the proposed screening planting as all planting would be set back from the junction.

7.6.4. In the event that the Board is minded to grant permission for the proposed development, I recommend that a condition is included requiring the developer to submit a Construction Traffic Management Plan for the agreement of the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.

## 7.7. **Archaeology**

7.7.1. The grounds of appeal raise concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed development on archaeological features in the area. Recorded monument ME045-019, classified as a recorded field system, is located within the mid-western section of the site. The monument has no surface expression and was identified through aerial photography. The Archaeological Assessment submitted with the application notes that the southern and western enclosure boundaries are visible within the aerial photography, as are many other boundaries that were present in historic mapping and are no longer extant. No other features of archaeological potential were noted within the aerial photographic coverage, including the recorded field system.

- 7.7.2. A geophysical survey of the site identified three discrete areas of archaeological potential. A 5 metre buffer is proposed around these areas. The assessment recommends that archaeological testing is undertaken in areas of archaeological potential prior to development and that works in the remaining sections of the archaeological study area are subject to archaeological monitoring. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs submitted a report to Meath County Council at application stage. The report indicates no objection to the development and recommends that a condition is included, in the event of a grant of permission, to require further geophysical survey and pre-development testing.
- 7.7.3. On the basis of the foregoing, and in particular, having regard to the commentary received from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, I am of the view that the potential for impacts on archaeology have been assessed during the course of the application and that suitable mitigation measures can be put in place. I recommend, in the event that the Board is minded to grant permission, that a condition is attached requiring pre-development testing.

## 7.8. Flood Risk

- 7.8.1. The OPW's Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (2011)<sup>3</sup> identifies a potential risk of pluvial flooding at four positions within the site. The PRFA mapping arises from a national screening exercise. The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DEHLG and OPW (2009) recommend that where flood risk may be an issue, a more detailed flood risk assessment should be carried out to assess the risk (Section 5.2 refers). The application is accompanied by a 'Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment'. This assessment concludes that a site walkover survey indicates that the identified flood zones are heavily drained by installed field drains and culverts to alleviate surface ponding and that it appears that there are no remaining undrained depressions within the site that might be prone to pluvial or surface water flooding. It is noted that potential for localised surface ponding is very shallow and will be well below any proposed solar panel height, and therefore poses little or no risk to the development. I would also note that the panels are set back from the watercourse within the northern section of the site. I consider

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<sup>3</sup> CRAMS Phase 1, a national screening exercise, based on available and readily-derivable information.

the level of assessment to be appropriate to the nature and scale of development proposed and accept the findings of the assessment.

## **7.9. Other Issues**

### **Amenity**

7.9.1. A number of appeals raise concerns in relation to the impact of the development on amenity. Impacts on the landscape and visual impacts are discussed in detail in Section 7.3 above. Impacts arising from glint and glare are discussed in detail in Section 7.4 above. In relation to noise impacts, I consider that the potential for impacts during the operational phase to be low and I am satisfied that any potential for impacts during the construction phase can be adequately addressed by condition.

### **Ecology**

7.9.2. The contents of the Ecological Impact Assessment are noted. I am of the view that the level of ecological assessment is acceptable and that the data sources referenced are suitable. I accept the findings of the assessment and am satisfied that no significant negative impacts would arise.

### **Grid Connection**

7.9.3. The appeal raises concerns in relation to potential impacts from the grid connection associated with the proposed solar farm. I would note that the grid connection does not form part of the current planning application and is subject to a separate consenting process. An indicative drawing has been submitted with the application that details the possible connection routes.

### **Health and Safety**

7.9.4. The appeal raises concerns in relation to health and safety impacts associated with the proposed development and the potential for impacts on horses. The applicant's response argues that solar panels produce very low electromagnetic fields that deteriorate very quickly over a short distance. The response also notes that all electrical equipment used will meet standards set out in the EU Electromagnetic



Compatibility (EMC) Directive (2014 / 30/ EU), a directive that seeks to ensure that electrical and electronic equipment does not generate, or is not affected by, electromagnetic disturbance. I would concur with the applicants view that there is no clear evidence to support the claim that health and safety impacts would arise from a Solar PV development of the nature proposed and I consider the development to be acceptable in this respect.

### **Property Values**

- 7.9.5. The appeal raises concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed development on property values, with one appeal including a submission from a local estate agent ascertaining to a negative impact. I would concur with the applicants view that there is no clear evidence to suggest that the proposed use would impact the value of property in its vicinity.

### **Community Gain and Consultation**

- 7.9.6. The grounds of appeal raise concerns in relation to community gain and consultation with the local community. Any proposal relating to community facilities or funding fall outside of the terms of the application and are not a matter for the Board. Planning and Development legislation sets out legislative requirements with regard to public consultation, in respect of planning applications. Any wider consultation or discussions with third parties, is a matter for the parties involved and is outside of the requirements of this legislation and is not a matter for the Board.

### **7.10. Appropriate Assessment Screening**

- 7.10.1. A Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Statement was submitted with the application. There are four Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the site, namely the Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC (001398), Malahide Estuary SAC (000205), Malahide Estuary SPA (004025) and the Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208), all located over 10 kilometres from the site.
- 7.10.2. I have reviewed the Ecological Impact Assessment and AA Stage 1 Screening Statement which accompanies the application. The development will not result in direct or indirect loss or disturbance to habitats or species associated with the sites listed above. There are potential hydrological links between the site and the

Malahide Estuary SAC and SPA, as the on-site watercourse is assumed to drain to Fleenstown-Great River, which is a tributary of the Ward and Broadmeadow Rivers, that discharge to the Malahide Estuary. In terms of separation, I would note that these Natura 2000 sites are c. 18 kilometres downstream of the appeal site (measured along the watercourse). The site is not proximate to any wetland habitat or known areas of regular waterbird use and is dominated by arable crops that are not attractive to waterbird species. The Outline Construction Management Plan states that the development will be carried out according to best practice regarding standard environmental protection and that there will be no in-stream works.

7.10.3. I consider that given the separation distance and the nature and types of construction involved that no potential pathways exist between the site and the Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC (001398) and the Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208). While there is a potential hydrological link to the Malahide Estuary SAC (000205) and the Malahide Estuary SPA (004025), I consider that given the separation distance and the nature and type of construction involved, that no significant effects on the conservation objectives of these Natura sites would arise as a result of the development. It is concluded that there would not be any significant in-combination contribution by the project such as would give rise to adverse effects on the Rye Water Valley / Carton SAC (001398), Malahide Estuary SAC (000205), Malahide Estuary SPA (004025) and the Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208).

### **Appropriate Assessment Screening Conclusion**

It is reasonable to conclude that based on the information on file, which I consider adequate to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on any designated European site in view of those sites' conservation objectives and that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (and submission of an NIS) is not therefore required.

### **7.11. Environmental Impact Assessment**

Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2017, lists classes of development and thresholds of development for which mandatory EIA is required. Solar panels are not listed and I am of the view that the subject proposal does not

fall within any of the categories set out in Schedule 5. On the basis that solar panel development does not fall within any of the categories set out in Schedule 5, I am of the view that EIA is not mandatory in this instance nor do the provisions for sub-threshold EIA apply.

## 8.0 Recommendation

Having regard to the foregoing I recommend that the decision of the Planning Authority be overturned in this instance and that permission be refused for the proposed development for the reasons and considerations set out below.

## 9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. The site of the proposed development is located within 'The Ward Lowlands' Landscape Character Area, as defined by the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. This Landscape Character Area is characterised as a 'highly sensitive' landscape type. Objective LC OBJ 1 of the Development Plan seeks "to ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of all landscape character types, and to maintain the visual integrity of areas of exceptional value and high sensitivity". It is considered, having regard to the low lying and open nature of the landscape, coupled with the significant scale and extent of the proposed solar farm, that the proposed development would have a significant adverse effect on the character of this landscape and that it would form a discordant and obtrusive feature on the landscape, would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area, would militate against the preservation of the rural environment and would set an undesirable precedent for other such development in the area. The proposed development would, therefore, contravene Objective LC OBJ 1 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. The Board is not satisfied, on the basis of the information submitted with the application and the appeal, including the information presented in the Glint and Glare Assessment submitted with the application, that reflections arising from the

proposed development would not endanger public safety by reason of a traffic hazard to users of the Kilbride Road (Local Road no.1007).

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Karen Kenny  
Planning Inspector

16<sup>th</sup> August 2018