



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-301676-18

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<b>Development</b>	Development of a grid system services facility on 0.76 hectare site and all associated site works.
<b>Location</b>	Land at Carrigogna, Midelton, Co. Cork.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Cork County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	18/4550
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Grid System Services Ltd
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant, subject to 12 conditions
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third party -v- Decision
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Eugene & Mary O'Callaghan
<b>Observer(s)</b>	Maurice & Ann Ahern
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2018
<b>Inspector</b>	Hugh D. Morrison

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## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is located 2.5 km north of Midleton town centre on the western side of an agricultural field that adjoins the eastern boundary of the ESB 110 kV Midleton station. This site lies within a rural area that is composed of farmland and golf courses, interspersed amongst which are one-off dwelling houses. It is accessed off the R626 via the local road network, i.e. from the west via the L3601 and the L36014.
- 1.2. The site is of rectangular shape and it is subject to gentle downward gradients in a southerly direction. This site extends over an area of 0.76 hectares and it is accessed at present through an agricultural gateway in its northern, roadside boundary. The site is bound by hedgerows to the north, west, and south. The remaining eastern boundary is undefined “on the ground”.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposal would entail the development of a grid system services facility, which would comprise the following elements:
  - 1 no. single storey electrical sub-station building (48 sqm),
  - 1 no. customer switchgear,
  - electrical inverter/transformer station modules,
  - containerised battery storage modules on concrete support structures (420 sqm),
  - heating, ventilation and air conditioning units (HVAC units),
  - access tracks and new site entrance,
  - associated electrical cabling and ducting,
  - security gates,
  - perimeter security fencing,
  - CCTV security monitoring system,

- animal fencing,
- earth bound and landscaping works, and
- all associated ancillary infrastructure.

### **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

#### **3.1. Decision**

Permission granted, subject to 12 conditions.

#### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

##### **3.2.1. Planning Reports**

See decision.

##### **3.2.2. Other Technical Reports:**

- TII: No comments.
- Environment: No objection, subject to conditions.
- Area Engineer: No objection, subject to conditions, including one that requires HGV traffic to access the site from the west only.

### **4.0 Planning History**

Pre-application consultation occurred on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018

### **5.0 Policy Context**

#### **5.1. Development Plan**

The Cork County Development Plan 2014 – 2020 (CDP) shows the site lying within the Prominent and Strategic Cork Metropolitan Green Belt Area and within the “City Harbour and Estuary” landscape character type 1, which is deemed to be a landscape of high value and high sensitivity and one which is of national importance. To

the west of the site, the R626 is identified as the start of a scenic route, which continues northwards.

Policy Objectives relating to the Green Belt Area are set out under RCI 5-1 to 5-7, Policy Objective GI 6-1 addresses landscape, and Policy Objectives GI 7-2 and GI 7-3 address scenic routes.

The proposal is for a grid system services facility. Policy Objective ED 6-1 addresses the electricity network. It begins by undertaking to “Support and facilitate the sustainable development, upgrade and expansion of the electricity transmission grid, storage and distribution network infrastructure.”

## 5.2. **Natural Heritage Designations**

Great Island Channel SAC (site code 001058)

Cork Harbour SPA (site code 004030)

## 6.0 **The Appeal**

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

The appellants, who reside in Fairway View, Carrigogna, cite the following grounds of appeal:

- Attention is drawn to the CDP’s Policy Objectives for Scenic Routes and to the Policy Objective GI 7-4 with respect to development on the approaches to towns and villages. Concern is expressed that the proposal would contravene these Objectives.
- Attention is drawn to the draft noise condition: its achievability is questioned on the grounds that noise fluctuations could occur at any time.
- Attention is drawn to the width, alignment, and condition of the un-named local road, which serves the site. The Carrigogna Bridge to the east of the site on this road is not suitable for HGVs. Some improvements have, however, been made to this road, recently.

- Concern is expressed over the risk of fire. In this respect the type of fire suppression system is not specified, there is no ready supply of water, water run-off from dosing flames may contain contaminants, and fumes may cause air pollution.
- Scenarios wherein there is a surge of power could cause the lithium batteries to ignite/explode or, alternatively, during a power cut, the cooling system would cease to operate and so there would be a risk of overheating.
- Foundations for the proposal may affect the water table with adverse implications for the local domestic supply of water.
- The site is A1 arable farmland, which should not be developed.

Due to the proximity of dwelling houses, the proposed siting would be inappropriate for a technology that is new to the country.

Due to the absence of government guidelines for the same, the proposal should be deemed premature.

The appellants have also attached a letter of objection that they submitted at the application stage, which raised the following further issues:

- The proposal would be visible from surrounding dwelling houses,
- The proposal would cause the devaluation of adjacent dwelling houses,
- The proposal would lead to noise pollution during construction and operational phases,
- The steepness of the site renders it unsuitable for the proposal,
- The southern boundary of the site is susceptible to flooding during heavy rain,
- Recorded monument CO065-072 maybe endangered,
- The proposal would upset the rural ambience of the area,
- The proposal would lead to a loss of wildlife habitat,
- The proposal would detract from the appeal of the area to walkers, and
- Traffic generated by the proposal would pose a risk to local residents who walk along the local road that serves the site.

## 6.2. Applicant Response

- The proposal is considered to be compatible with the Policy Objectives for the Metropolitan Green Belt for the following reasons:
  - The proposal adheres to renewable energy policy objectives,
  - Precedent has been established by other Energy Storage Systems (ESSs) elsewhere in Ireland and other renewable energy proposals in the County, all of which are sited in rural areas,
  - The proximity of the adjoining ESB sub-station, and
  - Green Belt Policy Objectives pertain primarily to residential development proposals.
- Views from the R626 of the proposal would be fleeting, they would include within them the existing 110 kV Midleton station and the 38 kV roadside sub-station, and they would be mitigated not only by existing landscaping, but also by proposed landscaping.
- The applicant has submitted a Construction and Traffic Management Assessment (CTMA) and Swept Path and Visibility Splay Analysis, which demonstrate that the site would be capable of being accessed satisfactorily. Construction and, subsequent, operational traffic movements would be capable of being accommodated on the local road network satisfactorily, too.
- The applicant has submitted an Environmental Report, which outlines that the proposal is a self-contained system and so it does not release wastes, residues or odours into the environment either during construction or operational phases.

The applicant has submitted a technical document, which provides a preliminary fire hazard assessment of Lithium Ion battery ESSs. This assessment is based on a “worst case” scenario, wherein no internal fire suppression system was installed. It demonstrated that 47 minutes elapsed before flames became visible and these were not accompanied by explosions or spillages.

By contrast, the proposal would be fitted with a water based internal fire suppression system, which would not require a local water supply, and which would ensure that any fire is automatically contained.

The siting of ESSs near to dwelling houses occurs in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

In the event of a power cut, the ESS's switchgear would automatically turn-off the facility to protect it from damage.

- The proposal would entail only shallow foundations and so ground water is unlikely to be affected. Best practice methodologies, as outlined in the CTMA, would be followed to ensure that any water run-off is contained within the site.

The applicant has responded, too, to the issues raised by the appellants:

- The proposed ESS would be sited beside the existing, more prominent, 110 kV Midleton station and so it would be unlikely to affect property values.
- The applicant's Noise Impact Assessment demonstrates that noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors would be within relevant thresholds.
- The site is not especially steep, i.e. there is a fall of 4m over a depth of 110m.
- The proposal would not lead to any heightened flood risk on the site.
- The said recorded monument is 535m away from the site and so it would be unaffected by the proposal.
- The identified route to and from the site would avoid Carrigogna Bridge.
- The aforementioned siting and the landscaping of the developed site would ensure that the proposal is assimilated into the surrounding landscaping.
- The existing site is of limited ecological interest and proposed hedgerows would contribute new habitat for that which would be lost.
- The proposal would be largely hid from views available from the local road and so the amenity value of this route to walkers would be largely unaffected.
- During the construction phase, health and safety would be prioritised and thereafter the developed site would be secured against public access.



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

None

### 6.4. **Observations**

Maurice & Ann Ahern of “Avanbloom”, Carrigogna

Objection is raised on the following grounds:

- The proposal would materially contravene the CDP’s Prominent and Strategic Cork Metropolitan Green Belt, due to its prominence and obtrusiveness.
- By the same token, the proposal would contravene the CDP’s designated scenic route along the R626.
- Traffic generated by the proposal would not be capable of being accommodated satisfactorily on the local road network.
- The visibility of the proposal from within views available from dwelling houses within the townland of Carrigogna.
- The industrial nature of the proposal would devalue nearby residential properties.
- The environmental impact of the construction phase and the on-going noise generated by the operational phase would adversely affect residential amenity.
- Gradients on the site render it unsuitable for the proposal.
- The disturbance of the water table could lead to flooding.
- A protected ringfort (recorded monument CO065-072) would be endangered by the proposal.
- Traffic may damage the Carrigogna Bridge, the site of a longstanding memorial.
- The rural ambience of the area would be eroded.
- The habitat of flora and fauna would be lost.
- The recreational value of the area would be impaired.

- In the event of a fire or an explosion, the health and safety of local residents has not been properly considered.
- In the absence of a national policy, the proposal should be deemed premature.
- The absence of a public consultation exercise on the part of the developer is lamented.

## 6.5. Further Responses

The appellants have commented on the applicant's response as follows:

- They did not state that the CDP would be materially contravened.
- Reference to the ESB 38 kV sub-station on the R626 is mis-placed as its demolition has been permitted.
- Previous comments on traffic management are reiterated.
- Water is referred to as a fire retardant and yet there is no water supply to the site.

How would contaminants be cleared up after a fire?

In the event of a power cut, how would the containers be kept cool?

- Draft condition 4 is critiqued on the basis that the noise emitting air conditioners could be turned on and off at any time.
- Run-off from the developed site would exacerbate the existing tendency for flooding to occur along the southern boundary of the site.
- The nearest local monument is adjacent to the existing 38 kV sub-station.

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. I have reviewed the proposal in the light of the CDP, relevant planning history, the submissions of the parties and the observers, and my own site visit. Accordingly, I consider that this application/appeal should be assessed under the following headings:

- (i) Land use and visual amenity,

- (ii) Archaeology,
- (iii) Traffic and access,
- (iv) Residential amenity and health and safety,
- (v) Water, and
- (vi) Screening for EIA and AA.

**(i) Land use and visual amenity**

- 7.2. The appellants and observers draw attention to the absence of national planning guidelines with respect to grid system service facilities like the one currently proposed. They contend that until such guidelines are in place, proposals for such facilities should be deemed to be premature and refused accordingly.
- 7.3. Under PL26.247217, the Board sought to refuse a solar farm on the grounds that, in the absence of adopted national, regional or local guidance or strategy for solar power, it would be premature to grant permission. A subsequent judicial review of this refusal led to it being quashed by Order of the High Court. Given the analogous circumstances that pertain to grid system service facilities, I do not consider that concern over prematurity would provide a defensible basis for objection.
- 7.4. The CDP addresses, under Policy Objectives CS 5-1 and ED 6-1, climate change adaption and the electricity network, respectively. Under the former Policy Objective, the Planning Authority undertakes to promote measures that “reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions” and, under the latter Policy Objective, it undertakes to “support and facilitate the sustainable development, upgrade and expansion of the electricity transmission grid, storage and distribution network infrastructure.”
- 7.5. The impetus for the current proposal is set out in the submitted Planning Statement, which states the following:

*Energy storage is a key element which will transform how we use electricity. Ireland has installed significant amounts of renewable energy generation in recent years, mainly in the form of wind turbines with solar developments expected in 2018. This has the advantage of increasing the amount of home grown renewable energy resources we use and reducing our carbon emissions. However solar and wind generation can also be intermittent since no power is produced when it gets dark or the wind stops blowing. As a result, energy storage systems are set to play a significant role in delivering a Secure,*

*Sustainable Electricity System (DS3) in Ireland now and in years to come. Eirgrid Group began a multi-year programme “Delivering a Secure, Sustainable Electricity System” (DS3) in response to the binding National and European Targets (for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions).*

The current proposal would thus further the aforementioned Policy Objectives of the CDP.

- 7.6. Under the CDP, the site lies within the Prominent and Strategic Cork Metropolitan Green Belt Area. Section 4.5.8 states that “While the overall objective for Greenbelt lands is to reserve them generally for use as agriculture, open space and recreation...it is important to recognise that there are a certain number of long-established commercial or institutional uses lying entirely within the Greenbelt.” This section goes on to state “It is not the intention of this plan to restrict their continued operation or (subject to maintaining the specific function and character of the Greenbelt in the area) to prevent appropriate proposals for expansion/intensification of the existing uses.”
- 7.7. The observers state that the proposal would materially contravene the Prominent and Strategic Cork Metropolitan Green Belt Area, due to its prominence and obtrusiveness. The applicant has responded by stating that the said Greenbelt pertains mainly to the question of rural housing and that the subject site lies beside the existing ESB 110 kV Midleton station.
- 7.8. I note that the observers are concerned about the visual amenity aspects of the siting of the proposal in the Greenbelt. I note, too, that the applicant by referring to the ESB station begins to address this concern. This reference, however, is also of relevance to the in principle land use question. Thus, an important factor in the selection of the site was its proximity to the said ESB station to which it would be connected. Given the nature of the proposal, as an electricity storage facility, I consider that it can reasonably be seen as an expansion of the activities undertaken in this station and so it would come within the ambit of Section 4.5.8 of the CDP cited above. Accordingly, I do not consider that any in principle objection to the proposal on land use grounds arises.
- 7.9. Turning to the question of visual amenity, the appellants and the observers draw attention to the CDP’s designation of the R626 to the west of the site as a scenic

route and to the use by walkers of the local road network. They also draw attention to the incidence of dwelling houses in the townland of Carrigogna, views from many of which would be affected by the proposal. They express concern that this proposal would be unduly prominent and that it would be visually obtrusive.

- 7.10. The applicant has responded to the above concern by drawing attention to the fleeting nature of views that would be available from the R626 of the developed site, due to the presence of trees and hedgerows and the ESB's 34 kV sub-station. It also states that within such views the ESB's 110 kV station would be visible. The proposed landscaping scheme for the site would augment existing mature trees and hedgerows along the roadside boundary to the north and the undefined eastern boundary would be enclosed by means of an embankment. Consequently, as illustrated by the applicant's photomontages, the proposal itself would be largely screened from view.
- 7.11. I note that the southern extremity of the aforementioned scenic route commences in the vicinity of the junction between the R626 and the L3601 to the west south west of the site and that the regional road follows a north west/south east axis at this point. Thus, for road users proceeding in a northerly direction, the scenic quality of the route lies ahead. I note, too, that the presence of the aforementioned ESB stations is accompanied by an extensive array of electricity lines and supporting poles and lattice towers and that views of the site from points further to the south on the R626 are affected by this wirescape. Consequently, the introduction of the proposal into the middle distance of such views would not appear intrusive and, given that the site is on the lower slopes of land that rises to the north and given, too, its position beside the ESB's 110 kV Midelton station, it would not appear unduly prominent or obtrusive either.
- 7.12. The applicant has submitted a site layout masterplan (drawing no. MA-01) which shows the separation distances between the site and the nearest dwelling houses to the east and north east. These distances range between 107m and 198m. Four of the dwelling houses thus identified lie on the northern side of the L36014 and two lie on the western side of this local road, further to the east of the site.
- The former dwelling houses are set back from the roadside and their principal elevations face south. Accompanying boundary treatments typically comprise

mature trees and hedgerows. Likewise, mature trees and hedgerows enclose the field on the opposite side of the local road to the south. Thus, views of the site at present are screened. Nevertheless, the applicant proposes to strengthen the screening afforded by the field side trees and hedgerows, where such strengthening is needed to ensure more complete screening.

- The latter dwelling houses have western side elevations that face towards the site and the ESB 110 kV Midelton station beyond. The applicant proposes to plant hedging along the eastern boundary of the field adjoining these two residential properties, in positions adjacent to the said side elevations. It also proposes to form an c. 4m high embankment along the eastern boundary of the site, which would effectively screen the proposal itself from views available at these dwelling houses and the local road beyond them. It would also screen the lower reaches of the said ESB station to the west of the site.

7.13. I consider that in-combination the proposed landscaping measures would ensure that the proposal would be capable of being adequately screened and assimilated within the surrounding landscape.

7.14. I conclude that a decision on the proposal cannot be defensibly postponed until a planning framework for grid system services facilities is in place and that its presence within the Greenbelt would be acceptable under the CDP. I also conclude that, subject to all of the proposed landscaping measures, this proposal would be compatible with the visual amenities of the area. No material contravention of the Greenbelt would ensue.

#### **(ii) Archaeology**

7.15. The appellants and the observers draw attention to a ringfort which is recorded monument CO065-072. They express concern that it may be endangered as a result of the proposed development of the subject site. The applicant has responded by drawing attention to the 535m separation distance between this site and the said recorded monument.

7.16. I have consulted the website of the National Monuments Service. I note that the aforementioned ringfort lies to the north of the site, on higher ground, at a distance at least as great as that cited by the applicant. Given these factors, it's difficult to identify circumstances under which this fort would be affected by the proposal. I also

note that there are other recorded monuments at comparable distances to the west and to the south of the site, i.e. CO093-065 and CO096-065, respectively. I do not anticipate that they would be affected either.

7.17. I conclude that the proposal would be compatible with the on-going protection of recorded monuments in the area surrounding the site.

**(iii) Traffic and access**

7.18. Under the proposal the existing agricultural gateway to the field would be retained for farming purposes and a new entrance would be formed from the L36014 (60 kmph), further to the west, to afford access to the site. This entrance would be sited at the optimum point in a slight bend in the local road to afford sightlines and forward visibility in either direction. The applicant has submitted plans that show these sightlines (drawing no. PL-05) and the temporary arrangements that would be available to facilitate the access/egress of HGVs approaching from the west to enter the site (drawing no. PL-06).

7.19. The appellants and observers express concern that the local road network would not be capable of handling traffic generated by the proposal and that in particular the Carrigogna Bridge to the east of the site would not be able to bear the weight of construction traffic.

7.20. The applicant has responded by drawing attention to the submitted Construction and Traffic Management Assessment (CTMA), which identifies a route to the site for construction traffic that would only entail arriving from and departing to the west, thereby avoiding the Carrigogna Bridge. The Area Engineer endorsed this approach and the Planning Authority's draft condition 11 requires the same.

7.21. The CTMA acknowledges that, whereas the available western sightline to the proposed entrance would be compliant with relevant standards, the eastern one would be sub-standard, i.e. from an x distance of 2.4m, a y distance of 49m would be available. However, the only appreciable volumes of traffic that would be generated by the proposal would be during the construction period when delivery times would be staggered, the entrance would be manned, and signage would alert road users to the presence of the construction site. (During the operational phase occasional visits only by maintenance staff would transpire).

7.22. I conclude that the local road network to the west of the proposed site entrance would be capable of handling the traffic generated by the proposal and that this entrance would be satisfactory for use during the construction and operational phases.

**(iv) Residential amenity and health and safety**

7.23. The appellants and observers draw attention to environmental impacts arising from the proposal, which they are concerned would adversely affect their residential amenities. They also express concern over the risk to their health and safety that would, in their view, emanate from the proposal.

7.24. The applicant has responded by stating that the proposal would be a self-contained system and so it would not generate waste or release residues or odours into the environment. It does, however, acknowledge that during the operational phase, while the batteries themselves would not emit any noise, the Heat, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning units (HVAC units) installed to prevent them from overheating would do so, as would the inverters and transformers that would connect the proposal to the electricity grid. A Noise Assessment of the proposal has thus been prepared, which predicts that the day time, evening time, and night time noise thresholds of 45, 40, and 35 dB would not be infringed at the nearest noise sensitive receptors, i.e. the nearest surrounding dwelling houses.

7.25. The Planning Authority's draft condition 4 sets out noise thresholds for each of the stated time periods that reflect the industrial nature of the noise adjusted for tonal character and impulsiveness. The appellants and observers question the appropriateness of this approach, on the basis that noise could ebb and flow around the clock. However, the time-specific thresholds reflect the variable ambient noise levels throughout a 24-hour period and so they would be appropriate. Furthermore, the relevant predictions in the applicant's Noise Assessment indicate that the thresholds in condition 4 would be capable of being respected.

7.26. During the construction phase, there would be range of environmental impacts, which would be capable of being addressed by means of, in addition to the



submitted Construction Traffic Management Assessment, a detailed Construction Management Plan. Submission of the same could be conditioned.

- 7.27. The appellants and observers raise a series of health and safety concerns that relate to the proximity of dwelling houses to the site and scenarios wherein a fire or explosion occurs on the developed site.
- 7.28. The applicant has responded to these concerns. It has submitted an account of a Lithium Ion Battery Energy Storage System Fire, which was conducted as an experiment under a “worst case” scenario. This account outlines how in the absence of a fire suppression system, 47 minutes elapsed before flames became visible and no explosions or spillages occurred. By contrast, the current proposal would be accompanied by an integrated fire suppression system, which would utilise an independent water supply. It also outlines how in the event of a power cut the switch gear would automatically shut down the facility.
- 7.29. The appellants and observers remain concerned that the batteries may, in the event of a power surge, explode, or, in the event of a power cut and the loss of the HVAC units, overheat and catch fire. Presumably, the former concern would be capable of being addressed by controlling the level of voltage that reaches the batteries and the latter one would be capable of being addressed by an emergency generator. Ultimately, these are matters for the regulator of the sector, Eirgrid Group, to attend to.
- 7.30. I conclude that the proposal would be compatible with the residential amenities of the area and that it would be capable of being operated in a manner that upholds health and safety.

#### **(v) Water**

- 7.31. The appellants and the observers express concern that the construction of foundations for the proposal could lead to ground water becoming contaminated and thus the water supply upon which local residents rely would be polluted. They also draw attention to the tendency for the southernmost part of the site to flood after heavy rain.
- 7.32. The applicant has responded by stating that the proposal would entail the construction of shallow foundations only and so ground water would be unlikely to be

affected. Best practice construction methodologies would also be employed to address the risk of surface water run-off.

- 7.33. The applicant has addressed the question of flooding in the submitted Environmental Report. OPW sources were interrogated and no identified flood risk was found to pertain to the site. The site is thus in Zone C for the purpose of flood risk. The Report goes on to state that, due to the fall across the depth of the site from north to south, the proposed containerised battery storage modules would be sited in positions between 0.4m and 3.91m above lower ground levels at the southern end of the site. All underground cabling would be watertight, potential ponding on-site would be counteracted and surface water run-off would soakaway. The addition of impermeable surfaces to the site would be small in area compared to the total area of the site and so existing patterns of soakage would continue largely as at present.
- 7.34. I conclude that the proposal would be compatible with safeguarding groundwater. I conclude, too, that the site is not the subject of any formally identified flood risk and that its layout and design would ensure that surface water could be satisfactorily dealt with.

#### **(vi) Screening for EIA and AA**

- 7.35. The applicant comments on whether or not the proposal is a type of development that would potentially be the subject of EIA. It concludes that this proposal would not come within the ambit of any of the types of development set out under Part 1 and 2 of Schedule 5 to Article 93 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 – 2018. Accordingly, the possibility of it being sub-threshold for the purposes of EIA does not normally arise. Nevertheless, the applicant has undertaken a screening exercise, which concludes that no significant environmental impacts would arise and so the need for EIA can be further discounted.
- 7.36. I concur with the applicant's conclusion that the proposal would not be of a type of development that is subject to EIA.
- 7.37. The applicant has submitted an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report. I will draw upon this Report in undertaking my own screening for AA below.
- 7.38. The site is neither in nor near to a Natura 2000 site. The nearest such sites are the Great Island Channel SAC (site code 001058) and the Cork Harbour SPA (site code 004030), which lie to the south west of Midleton town centre. I have been unable to

identify a source/pathway/receptor route between the site and these Natura 2000 sites.

- 7.39. During the construction phase, standard construction methods would be used to address the possibility of contaminated surface water run-off from the site. During the operational phase, the containerised batteries sited on the site would be sealed and so the possibility of contaminated surface water run-off would not arise. Thus, water quality of any local watercourses that may be tributaries of the Owennacurra River would be safeguarded.
- 7.40. The seabirds which are identified as the qualifying interests for the aforementioned SPA are unlikely to use the site for roosting and foraging, due to its distance from Cork Harbour, its position on the far side of Midelton from the sea, and its hilly terrain. Thus, the partial loss of the arable field in question would not have a significant effect on these interests.
- 7.41. It is reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order 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 European Sites Nos. 001058 and 004030, or any other European site, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (and submission of a NIS) is not therefore required.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

- 8.1. That permission be granted.

## **9.0 Reasons and Considerations**

Having regard to the Cork County Development Plan 2014 – 2020, it is considered that, subject to conditions, the proposal would comply with the Policy Objectives set out in this Plan for climate change adaptation, the electricity network, and the Prominent and Strategic Cork Metropolitan Green Belt Area. Provided the proposal is landscaped as proposed, it would be capable of being screened and thereby integrated into the landscape in a manner that would be compatible with the visual amenities of the area. Provided construction traffic accesses and egresses the site

along the local road network from the west only, it would be capable of being accommodated on this network. Proposed access arrangements would be satisfactory. The environmental impact of the proposal would be compatible with the amenities of nearby residential properties. Surface water would be capable of being handled satisfactorily, too. The proposal would not require to be the subject of EIA and no AA issues would arise. It would thus accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 10.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2. HGV traffic movements to and from the site shall only be undertaken via that portion of the local road to the west of the entrance to the site.

**Reason:** To avoid use of the Carrigogna Bridge on the local road to the east of the site, in the interest of public safety.

3. The permission shall be for a period of 30 years from the date of commissioning of the grid system services facility.

**Reason:** To enable the planning authority to review its operation in the light of the circumstances then prevailing.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the sightlines to the east and to the west of the proposed entrance shown on drawing no. PL-05 shall be provided and, thereafter, no structure or vegetation over 1m in height shall place in or allowed to grow within these sightlines.

**Reason:** In the interest of road safety.

5. The site and adjoining land under the applicant's control shall be landscaped in accordance with a comprehensive scheme of landscaping, details of which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This scheme shall include the following:

(a) A plan to scale of not less than [1:500] showing –

(i) Existing trees, hedgerows, specifying which are proposed for retention as features of the site landscaping.

(ii) The measures to be put in place for the protection of these landscape features during the construction period.

(iii) The species, variety, number, size and locations of all proposed trees and shrubs, which shall comprise predominantly native species such as mountain ash, birch, willow, sycamore, pine, oak, hawthorn, holly, hazel, beech or alder.

(b) Specifications for mounding, levelling, cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment.

(c) A timescale for implementation.

All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established.

Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years from the completion of the development, shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential and visual amenity.

6. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction

practice for the development, including:

- (a) Location of the site and materials compound(s) including area(s) identified for the storage of construction refuse;
- (b) Location of areas for construction site offices and staff facilities;
- (c) Details of site security fencing and hoardings;
- (d) Details of on-site car parking facilities for site workers during the course of construction;
- (e) Details of the timing and routing of construction traffic to and from the construction site and associated directional signage, to include proposals to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads to the site;
- (f) Measures to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris on the public road network;
- (g) Details of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration, and monitoring of such levels;
- (h) Containment of all construction-related fuel and oil within specially constructed bunds to ensure that fuel spillages are fully contained. Such bunds shall be roofed to exclude rainwater;
- (i) Off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste and details of how it is proposed to manage excavated soil;
- (j) Means to ensure that surface water run-off is controlled such that no silt or other pollutants enter local surface water sewers or drains.

A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Management Plan shall be kept for inspection by the planning authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of amenities, public health and safety.

7. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays.  
Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional

circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

**Reason:** In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

8. (a) During the operational phase of the proposed development, the noise level arising from the development, as measured at the nearest shall not exceed:-
  - (i) An Leq,1h value of 50 dB(A) during the period 0800 to 2200 hours from Monday to Saturday inclusive.
  - (ii) An Leq,15 min value of 40 dB(A) at any other time.
- (b) All sound measurement shall be carried out in accordance with ISO Recommendation 1996: 2007: Acoustics - Description and Measurement of Environmental Noise.

**Reason:** To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

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Hugh D. Morrison  
Planning Inspector

21<sup>st</sup> November 2018