



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP 301876-18

Development	Refurbishment and upgrade of a 220/110kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) Electrical Substation and associated works at 220/110kV Maynooth Electrical Substation
Location	Maynooth and Straffan, Co. Kildare
Planning Authority	Kildare County Council
Prospective Applicant	Eirgrid plc.
Type of Request	Section 182E request for SID Pre-application consultation – whether project is or is not strategic infrastructure development.
Inspector	Pauline Fitzpatrick

1.0 Proposed Development

The existing 220/110kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electrical substation is located alongside the R406 in Co. Kildare between Maynooth and Straffan

Eirgrid Plc proposes refurbishment and upgrade works including:

- Installation of additional new equipment similar to the existing typical electrical substation equipment
- Upgrade of the existing AIS equipment at both 220kV and 110kV ie. like for like replacement of existing equipment.
- Removal of some existing equipment
- Extension of the existing substation compound by approx. 10 metres both to the north and south and erection of an associated security fence.

The existing substation is a key node on the electricity transmission grid facilitating the distribution of power to and from the Dublin area. It was first commissioned in the 1960s. Its reliability is crucial for the integrity of the entire transmission system.

Much of the equipment has come to the end of its useful life and requires replacement and/or reconfiguration. The works will improve the operational flexibility of the substation and ensure it remains a robust mode in the transmission system.

The works will also contribute to the strengthening of the overall meshed grid thereby providing a more secure and reliable system.

2.0 Applicant's case

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

- While of considerable benefit to the network from a planning perspective, the development is essentially an enhancement of existing substation infrastructure predicated by the requirement to update and refurbish the existing AIS substation.

- Given its nature, function and scale it is not, of itself, of strategic importance to the State or region. Nor does it meet any other provisions for SID set out in Section 37A(2) of the Act.
- The Board decided that comparable developments were not strategic infrastructure. Case references VC0031, VC0028, VC0025, VC0026, VC0034, Vc0040, VC0070, VC0109 and VC0110 cited.

Eirgrid's preliminary view is that neither appropriate assessment nor environmental impact assessment is required for the proposed development.

3.0 Legal Provisions

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

Subsection 9 states that

In this section 'transmission' in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of

- (a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or
- (b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.

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

the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the

Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board.

4.0 **Assessment**

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

In this case refurbishment and upgrade works to an existing AIS 220/110kV substation are being proposed arising from the fact that much of the equipment is coming to the end of its useful life. A minor expansion of the substation footprint by 10 metres both to the north and south is also proposed. A need, precedent and role for the presence of a substation in the location are well established. The stated purpose for the proposed works, namely to improve the operational flexibility of the substation, ensuring it remains a robust mode in the transmission system thereby contributing to the strengthening of the overall meshed grid and providing a more secure and reliable system, might be considered of some strategic importance. In addition, the Board should also note the statement in Eirgrid’s Grid Development Strategy to optimise the existing grid which puts the upgrading of such facilities clearly in a more strategic planning context.

Notwithstanding, having regard to the stated purpose, nature and scale of the proposed development and location within the existing substation compound, to the stated purpose of the 2006 Act as set out in the long title and to the general description and scale of strategic infrastructure development set out in section 37A(2), I conclude that the proposed development consisting of the said upgrade

and refurbishment works does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

5.0 Recommendation

I recommend that Eirgrid plc. be informed that the proposed development consisting of refurbishment and upgrade of a 220/110kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) Electrical Substation works at the existing 220/110kV Maynooth Electrical Substation alongside the R406 in Co. Kildare between Maynooth and Kildare does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made in the first instance to Kildare County Council

Pauline Fitzpatrick
Senior Planning Inspector

September, 2018