



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-306018-19

Development

Development of a 110 kV loop-in/loop-out substation and associated infrastructure including c 500 metres of 110kV underground electricity cable and two single circuit strain towers to facilitate connection to the existing Shankill-Lisdrum transmission line.

Location

Newbliss. Co Monaghan

Prospective Applicant

Drumlins Park Ltd

Planning Authority

Monaghan Co. Council

Date of Site Inspection

February 18th, 2020

Inspector

Breda Gannon

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. On November 25th, 2019, a request was received by An Bord Pleanála to enter into pre-application discussions with respect to the proposed development under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, as amended.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The sub-station site is located south of Newbliss, Co Monaghan. It is located on the south side of a narrow local road that provides access to a small number of residential properties and land holdings. The area is one of undulating rural landscape which has a dispersed settlement pattern. The site is currently in agricultural use and comprises a number of fields separated by hedgerows
- 2.2. The proposed strain towers would be located outside the compound on a site to the south east which is crossed by the Shankill-Lisdrum 110 kV transmission line. There is a cluster of houses in this location.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposal is to construct a 110kV loop-in/loop-out substation including a substation compound containing a switch room, control building and associated electrical plant and apparatus. It also includes the provision of c 500m of 110kV underground electricity cable and two single circuit strain towers to facilitate connection into the existing 110kV Shankill-Lisdrum transmission line.
- 3.2. The proposed substation is to facilitate the connection of a proposed windfarm to the national grid. The windfarm application is currently under consideration by Monaghan Co. Council under Reg Ref No 19/486. The prospective applicant notes that the EIA submitted with that application includes three potential options to connect the proposed wind farm to the national grid. One of these options is for the development of a 110kV substation, which is the subject of this pre-application consultation.

4.0 Prospective Applicants Submission to the Board

- In each of the most comparable recent cases, the Board has determined similarly proposed substations to be SID (302516-18, 303194-18)
- Having regard to these precedents the prospective applicant is of the view that the proposed substation would form a new mode on the national transmission network and would, therefore, come within the scope of section 182A of the Act, necessitating an application made directly to the Board.

5.0 Planning History

Reg Ref 19/486 – Current application to develop an 8 no. turbine wind farm to the west/northwest of proposed substation site. Further information was sought by Monaghan Co Council on 18/12/19.

6.0 Strategic Infrastructure – Legal Provisions

- 6.1. Under section 182A (1) of the 2000 Act (inserted by section 4 of the 2006 Act) where a person, (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.
- 6.2. 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.

The following definitions, as set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, as amended, are noted:

“Transmission” is defined as:

‘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, 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’.

“Distribution” is defined as:

“The transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switch gear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers.

“Electric plant” is defined as:

“any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity other than –

- (a) An electric line
- (b) A meter used for ascertaining the quantity of electricity supplied to any premises, or
- (c) An electrical appliance under the control of the consumer.

7.0 **Assessment**

The proposal is to construct a new substation which will be looped into the existing Shankill-Lisdrum 110 kV transmission line by way of underground cable and 2 no. single circuit strain towers. The substation will facilitate electricity generated by a proposed windfarm to be connected into the national grid.

I consider that the proposed substation constitutes 'electrical plant' as defined above in that it is plant for the purposes connected with the generation of electricity. The proposed development also includes high voltage lines for the purposes of connecting the substation to the adjacent 110kV transmission line. Section 182A(9) of the Act sets a threshold of 110kV in order for a high voltage electricity line to be considered strategic infrastructure. No threshold is set in respect of a substation.

The new substation and loop-in infrastructure will enable the electricity generated by a proposed windfarm to be stepped up to a voltage of 110 kV for direct transmission to the national grid. This means that the electric power of the overall existing circuit will be entirely diverted into the substation and back out again. In effect, the new substation will form a new node along the existing circuit and as such, the new substation with associated cables will form part of the existing transmission network.

The proposal is similar to other proposals put before the Board for pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. In these cases (300167, 301646, 302516, 303194), the Board determined that the provision of a new 110kV substation and associated overground/underground cabling which is to be looped into the existing transmission system constitutes strategic infrastructure. The cases are as follows:

- VC0111 - Rosspile. Co. Tipperary.
- 300167 - Dunboyne Co Meath.
- 301646 - Harristown, Castlejordan and Clongall. Co. Meath
- 302516 - Tullamore, Listowel. Co. Kerry.
- 303194 - Knockardugar. Co Laois

8.0 Planning and environmental considerations

The site is located in a rural landscape, accessed by a narrow local road. It is not impacted by any of the development constraints identified in Map 6.1 of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025. It is removed from designated scenic landscapes, views from scenic views, greenways and amenity areas. The closest designated landscape is Annaghmackerrig Lake, Woodland and Environs, to

the east, which is designated as an Area of Secondary Amenity (SA9) in the development plan. There are no Natura 2000 sites or NHA/PNHA's close to the site.

There are residential properties close to the location of the proposed strain towers with the potential to be impacted by the development.

The following matters are relevant:

- Impacts on the visual amenities of the area.
- Impacts on the residential amenity of adjacent dwellings.
- Access – Adequacy of road network to cater for vehicles during construction /operational phases of development.

9.0 Conclusion

I consider that the proposed development as described in the submission and drawings constitutes strategic infrastructure coming within the scope of section 182(A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, necessitating an application directly to the Board.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1. I recommend that Drumlins Park Limited be informed that the proposed development consisting of a 110kV substation and associated loop-in infrastructure to tie into the existing 110kV Shankill – Lisdrum overhead transmission line at Newbliss, Co Monaghan as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 25th, November 2019 falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Board.

Breda Gannon

Breda Gannon
Senior Planning Inspector

8th, April 2020.

Appendix 1

The following is a schedule of prescribed bodies considered relevant in this instance for the purposes of Section 182A(4)(b) of the Act.

Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Monaghan Co. Council

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Failte Ireland

An Taisce

Heritage Council

Commission of Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy

Health Service Executive