



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-314111-22

Development	Upgrading of the existing Woodland 400/200 kV electrical substation
Location	Townland of Woodland Batterstown, Co. Meath
Planning Authority	Meath Co. Co.
Prospective Applicant	Eirgrid Plc
Type of Application	SID Pre-Application Consultation request under S.182E of the planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
Inspector	Conor McGrath

1.0 Introduction

The Board received a request on 19/07/2022 from EirGrid plc. to enter into a pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in relation to development consisting of the proposed upgrading of the existing Woodland 400 / 200 kV electrical substation in Co. Meath.

This report provides an overview of the proposed development, relevant precedents and legislative provisions and recommends that the proposed development would not constitute strategic infrastructure development. A pre-application consultation meeting was not deemed to be necessary in respect of this case.

2.0 Site Location and Description

The development relates to the upgrading of the existing Woodlands 400/200kV substation, which is an important node on the transmission network. The station is located approx. 2.5km northwest of Batterstown and approx. 4.5km southwest of Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. The station is accessed from local roads to the south, which connect to the R154 to the east and R156 to the southwest. The M3 motorway lies approx. 2km east of the site. The surrounding lands are generally in agricultural use, with mature trees and hedgerow field boundaries. A number of high voltage circuits / lines converge at the substation, while the converter station for the East-West Interconnector from North Wales is located adjacent to the substation site.

3.0 Proposed Development

The proposed development is described as comprising the following:

1. Installation of additional outdoor Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electrical apparatus, including an approx. 4ha extension to the existing compound. This includes:
 - a) An extension to both sides of the existing 400kV busbar, with associated wing coupler at either end which is used to connect two busbars.

- b) Additional apparatus and works to two existing busbars to create sectionalising bays, which allow half of a busbar to be switched off at a time for maintenance or other purposes, rather than the full busbar.
 - c) Relocation of existing transformer connections to an adjacent location on new busbar.
 - d) Extension to existing control building (70-sq.m.).
2. Renewal, alteration and / or removal of associated 400 / 200kV apparatus and equipment including batteries and chargers, insulators, instrument transformers, overhead conductors, disconnectors, circuit breakers, surge arrestors, line traps, lighting masts, pantographs and filter reactors as required.
 3. Ancillary site development works including site preparation work, site clearance and levelling, provision of hardstanding, access roads and construction compound, associated underground cabling and earthgrid, associated extended surface water drainage network including soakaway, 2.6m high palisade fencing and gates, lighting poles and landscaping as required.

The development does not include any new transmission circuits.

In respect of the need for the proposed development the prospective applicants refer to an issue with security of supply due to the current layout of the 400kV busbars (conductors) within the station. During periods of high power flows there is potential for a voltage collapse in the transmission system due to the loss of a single circuit or piece of equipment within the station. The proposed extension and upgrade of the station, reconfiguring the existing 400kV AIS double busbar to comprise a ring busbar configuration, will address this and allow the station to act as a secure and reliable transmission node on the grid.

It is indicated that the development will be subject to screening for AA and EIA as part of any planning application. While the prospective applicants state that they consider that an NIS may be required, they do not expect that EIA will be required.

4.0 Nature of the Request

The Board is requested by EirGrid plc to advise as to whether or not the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development in accordance with the provisions of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended or whether an application for permission should be made to the local authorities for the respective areas in accordance with the provisions of s.34 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

5.0 Relevant Planning History

5.1. At Woodland Electrical Station

- ABP ref. PL17.219560 PA ref. DA/60134: Permission granted in November 2006 (appeal dismissed) for alterations to the existing 400KV electrical transformer station consisting of new transformer, radiator bank, 3 surge arrestors and oil interceptor at Woodland, Batterstown, Co. Meath.
- ABP ref. VC17.VC0050: The Board determined in August 2010 that a proposed new 400/220 KV Transformer at the existing Woodland Station, County Meath did not constitute strategic infrastructure development.
- ABP-314112-22: Concurrent pre-application consultation request by Eirgrid PLC in respect of a transmission network reinforcement project comprising a 400kV UGC (approx. 53km) between Woodland electrical substation station in Co. Meath and Dunstown 400kV substation in Co. Kildare.

5.2. The following cases are cited by the prospective applicants wherein the Board determined that proposed developments did not comprise strategic infrastructure:

- VC0040: Redevelopment of the existing 220 kV Finglas Electrical Substation.
- VC0055: Redevelopment of the existing 400 kV Moneypoint Electrical Substation.
- VC0061: Redevelopment of the existing 110 kV Ardnacrusha Electrical Substation.

- VC0070: New Reactors at existing Poolbeg 220/110 kV Electrical Substation.
- VC0101: Redevelopment of the existing 220 kV Inchicore Electrical Substation.
- VC0109: New Reactor at the existing Knockanure 220 kV Electrical Substation.
- VC0110: Redevelopment of the existing 110 kV Galway Electrical Substation.
- 301174: New STATCOM devices at three existing electrical substation sites.
- 300928: Redevelopment of the existing 110 kV Kilbarry Electrical Substation.
- 301174: New STATCOM devices at three existing electrical substation sites.
- 303148: Installation of series capacitors at three existing 400 kV electrical substations.

5.3. In addition, I note the following cases which were determined not to fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000:

- 300928-18: Development of a 110kV Gas Insulated switchgear (GIS) Electrical substation and associated works at the existing 110kV Kilbarry Electrical substation, at Old Whitechurch Road, Cork.
- 301876-18: Refurbishment and upgrade of a 220/110kV Air Insulated Switchgear Electrical Substation and associated works at the existing 220/110 kV Maynooth Electrical Substation.
- 311950-21: Modification and upgrade of the Dalton 110kV Substation Location Townland of Clare (Claremorris), Co. Mayo.
- 306908-20: Development of a 110kV control room at the existing Trien 220/110 kV electricity substation and associated works at Trienearagh, Co. Kerry.
- 303838-18: 110 kV bay to connect to the existing busbar at Dunmanway 110 kV substation, Co. Cork.

6.0 Case made by Prospective Applicant

The prospective applicants make the following points in respect of the proposed development:

- This is essentially an extension and enhancement of existing substation infrastructure and would not be incongruous to the existing infrastructure in terms of its form or appearance.
- The Board has previously determined that similar developments at established substations did not fall within the scope of s.182A, and a number of examples are cited in this regard.
- Given the nature, scale and function of the development and its relationship with the existing substation, the development is not considered to constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development, nor does it meet the criteria set out in s.37(A)(2).

7.0 Legislative Provisions

It is noted that the long title of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006, refers to applications for planning permission in respect of certain proposed developments of strategic importance to the state.

Section 2(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), defines '*strategic infrastructure*' as including, inter alia: "(d) any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1)"

Section 182A(1) of the Act provides that, where a person (the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of the development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 182A(9) states that "... '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."

Section 182E(1) provides that a prospective applicant who proposes to apply for approval under section 182B or 182D shall, before making the application, enter into consultations with the Board in relation to the proposed development.

Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended sets out the following definitions:

Transmission: "...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."

'Electric plant': ".....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 a consumer"

8.0 **Assessment**

As noted above, 'strategic infrastructure' is defined as including development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, with 'transmission' defined as either:

- The transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line of 110 kV or more, or an interconnector.
- The transport of electricity by means of a transmission system (a system of high voltage lines and electric plant 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, including interconnectors but excluding distribution system lines).

Based on the information accompanying the request, I consider that the existing Woodlands 400/200kV substation comprises part of the electricity transmission system for the purposes of the Act. In this regard, I also note that the station is identified on the Transmission System map provided on the EirGrid website¹.

The proposed development comprises the upgrade and enhancement of the existing substation in order to ensure operational reliability and security of power supply on the transmission network. Extension of the existing compound will be required and will occur within the existing land ownership boundary. There will be no significant landscape or visual impacts arising, or changes in the character of the site. Existing transmission operations or function of the substation will not change materially as a result of the proposed development. I consider that the proposed upgrade and enhancements to the existing substation are of a type and scale that would reasonably be expected to be undertaken as part of the system operator's maintenance and upgrade regime.

The Board has previously determined a considerable number of requests for pre-application consultation in relation to proposed improvement / refurbishment / upgrade works at existing substations. It has generally been determined that such development does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the 2000 Act, as amended and consequently that planning applications should be made in the first instance to the local planning authority.

Having regard to the limited nature, scale and purpose of the proposed development, the fact that it relates to works to existing substation infrastructure and functions, and noting previous determinations by the Board in respect of similar requests for pre-application consultation requests and the stated purpose of the 2006 Act as set out in its long title; I do not consider that it would fall within the scope of s.182A or

¹ [Z: . Transmission Systems Engineering\Dan Askew\Working Folder\Transmission Map 2020\Final\Transmission Map V0.2 A3 \(1\) \(eirgridgroup.com\)](Z: . Transmission Systems Engineering\Dan Askew\Working Folder\Transmission Map 2020\Final\Transmission Map V0.2 A3 (1) (eirgridgroup.com))

constitute strategic infrastructure development as defined in the Act of 2000, as amended.

9.0 **Conclusion**

I conclude that the proposed development would not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, necessitating the making of an application directly to the Board.

10.0 **Recommendation**

I recommend that the prospective applicant, EirGrid plc. be informed that the proposed development, consisting of the upgrading of the existing Woodland 400/200kV electrical substation, in the townland of Woodland Batterstown, Co. Meath, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 19/07/2022, does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that planning applications should be made in the first instance to the relevant planning authorities.

Conor McGrath
Senior Planning Inspector

15/08/2022