

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ACP-323045-25

Development

Proposed Development of a 110kV Substation and Grid Connection.

Location

Lands at within the townlands of Dysart, Coolnacarrick, Greatheath, Cremorgan, Money Upper and others Co. Laois.

Planning Authority

Laois County Council.

Type of Application

Pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Prospective Applicant

Ørsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited.

Date of Site Inspection

16th September 2025

Inspector

Enda Duignan.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Commission received a request on 11th July 2025 from Ørsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited to enter into pre-application consultations under Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), in relation to the proposed development of a 110kV Substation within the townland of Morett Co. Laois, and its grid connection to the national grid via a loop in/loop out connection to the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV Overhead line within the townland of Morett, and a tail-fed connection to the Coolnabacky 110kV Substation within the townland of Coolnabacky, Co Laois.
- 1.2. The primary purpose of the pre-application consultation is to address the issue of whether or not the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure for the purposes of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- 1.3. One (1) no. pre-application consultation meeting was held with the prospective applicant on 1st October 2025. A record of the meeting is on file. A letter requesting closure of the consultation process was received on the 19th January 2026.
- 1.4. This report provides an overview of the proposed development, as well as details of legislative provisions, and relevant precedents.

2.0 Site Location & Description

- 2.1. In terms of the substation site context, the site is located to the south-east of the M7 motorway (linking Limerick and Dublin), between the towns of Portlaoise to the south-west and Monasterevin to the north-east. The substation site is located within the townland of Morett and has an area of c. 3.48ha. Access to the site is currently available via an existing entrance from the L7815 local road to the west. It is noted that the L78151 also lies to the south of the site.
- 2.2. The substation site is located within a larger land parcel that currently comprises agricultural pastoral lands and has a relatively flat topography. There is a 110kV transmission line traversing the substation site in a north-south orientation. It is also noted that the Dunrally stream flows along the northern boundary of the larger land parcel, within which the substation site is located. The surrounds can be described as

a rural area, typically characterised by agricultural lands, one-off dwellings and farmsteads located along the surrounding road network.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. By way of background, planning permission was granted by the Laois County Council (Ref. 25/60148) for the development of a solar farm with an overall area of c. 249ha. The solar farm application is currently the subject of a Third Party appeal with the Commission (PL-500061-LS). The solar farm is spread across a total of 5 no. land parcels, and I note that the substation site is located within West Parcel (A).
- 3.2. The proposed development includes the construction of a 110kV Substation located within West Parcel (A). This substation will comprise 2 no. separate compounds and buildings, an EirGrid Compound and an Independent Power Producer (IPP) Compound. The compound is made up of a hard standing concrete measuring 1.6ha. The EirGrid substation building will have an area of c. 450sq.m and a height of 8.7m. The IPP switchgear room will consist of a building of c. 192sq.m with a height of 6.5m. The substation compound is proposed to be surrounded by a 2.6m high palisade fence with associated gates, with ESB specification lightning masts that typically consist of an 18m monopole.
- 3.3. The proposed development also includes the provision of a Loop in/Loop out connection to the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV Overhead line within the townland of Morett. Furthermore, it is proposed to provide an underground Grid Connection Route (GCR) to Coolnabacky 110kV Substation. The Coolnabacky 110kV substation is located c. 15.6 km south and the proposed GCR will be via an underground tail fed connection traversing the townlands of Dysart, Coolnacarrick, Greatheath, Cremorgan, Money Upper, Lamberton Demesne, Killenny, Aghnahily, Ballygormill South, Coolnabacky, Ballygormill North, Ballinlough, Raheen, Hophall, Heathlodge, Ballycarroll, Morett, Powelstown, Derrytrasna, Esker and Greatheath. It is noted that the GCR will be primarily laid within the public road. It is confirmed that both the Loop In/Loop Out and underground tail fed grid connection are required to provide a circuit between the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV line and the Coolnabacky 110kV substation.
- 3.4. Within the correspondence dated 19th January 2026 (i.e. closure request), the

Applicant sought to clarify elements of the grid connection and the associated construction works Red Line Boundary (RLB). As described within *Red Line Planning Boundary Amendment - Cappakeel SF* as provided by TLI Group (Appendix 2 of closure request dated 19th January 2026), the proposed Loop in/Loop out design incorporates the following components:

- Two new interface mast structures (15m, Type 1493ET), positioned adjacent to the existing Cushaling–Portlaoise 110 kV overhead line (OHL);
- Termination of the existing overhead conductors at both new structures;
- Removal of the existing conductor span between the structures;
- Transition to underground ducted cables to complete the loop-in connection to the Cappakeel 110 kV GIS substation.

3.5. It is stated that this configuration allows connection without reliance on new overhead tower sets beyond the two interface structures. The Loop in/Loop out connection will be constructed using two separate cable runs:

- c. 195m from Tower 156A to the substation;
- c. 153m from Tower 157A to the substation.

These feed into the 110kV substation compound, and into the underground cable route to provide a tail fed connection to the Coolnabacky 110kV Substation and the national grid.

3.6. Furthermore, the RLB has been adjusted to reflect the following:

- The confirmed location of Towers 156A and 157A,
- Sufficient clearance from the live 110kV OHL to allow foundation installation without requiring an outage,
- The underground cable corridor alignment,
- Separation from internal 33kV interconnector cable trenches,
- Boundary refinement along the access track and solar farm perimeter.

It is stated that the modifications to the RLB will ensure that all elements required for construction and operation of the proposed GCR are contained within the revised planning application boundary.

4.0 Prospective Applicant's Case

- 4.1. The Applicant considers that the proposed development falls within the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act, 2006 and comes within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The applicant notes that the proposal also meets the criteria of Section 37A(2)(c) of the Act as the proposed substation will have capacity to serve future renewable energy development in an area which is close to Portlaoise town, and the county boundaries of Kildare (5.2km) and Offaly (8.2km). It is contended that comparable precedent cases considered by ACP involving proposals for 110kV substations to allow connection to the national grid for large scale solar PV schemes have determined that 110kV substations and associated ancillary development are SID. It is the Applicant's view that ACP should determine that the proposed 110kV Substation and grid connection is a SID by reason of its relationship to the national transmission network, and its contribution to the Irish state in reducing the nation's reliance on fossil fuel in the transition to a low carbon society.

5.0 Relevant Precedents

- 5.1. A review of the Commission's case files was carried out the on 26th January 2026 to collate any relevant planning precedent cases for this class of development. There is significant precedent specific to the circumstance of this application where the proposed development included a 110 kV substation connecting a renewable energy development to the national grid. These include:

Table 5.1.

ABP Ref.	Location	Development Description	Decision Date	ABP Decision
318844	Belinstown, Swords, Co Dublin	110kV substation	14/11/2024	Is a Strategic Infrastructure Development
318685	Rathcoursey East and Garranekinnefe lake, Co Cork	110kV AIS electricity substation (with 33kV customer compound) to connect to and serve a solar farm, associated loop-in / loop out infrastructure to connect into an existing 110kV overhead transmission line and all associated site works	09/09/2024	Is a Strategic Infrastructure Development

317297	Profile Park, Baldonnell, Co Dublin	110kV substation and grid connection	25/03/2024	Is a Strategic Infrastructure Development
318011	Great Island, Kilmorea, Co. Wexford	BESS, 110kV substation and 110kV Underground Grid Connection to existing Great Island EirGrid Substation and all associated site works	18/12/2023	Substation and cables are SID. The BESS is not SID.
319155	Ballyvatta, Co. Cork	Proposed development of a 110kV substation and grid connection to the adjacent 220kV Knockraha Substation.	16/06/2024	Is a Strategic Infrastructure Development
320535	Walterstown, Co Meath	110/38/20 kV Loop in GIS Electrical Substation connecting into the Dunfirth-Kinnegad-Rinawade 110kV OHL	25/10/2024	Is a Strategic Infrastructure Development

6.0 Legislative Provisions

6.1. Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

- Section 2(1) defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:
 - “(d) any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1)”
- Section 182A states-
 - “....where] a person (hereafter referred to in this section 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 the development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.”
- Section 182A(9) states-
 - “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.”

- Section 182E(1) states-

“A person (“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.”

6.2. Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended

- Section 2(1) sets out the following definitions:

- o **‘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.”

- o **‘Electric line’:**

“...has the meaning assigned to it by section 4(1) of the ESB (Electronic Communications Networks) Act 2014.”¹

- o **‘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”

- o **‘Distribution’:**

“...the transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that

¹ See section 6.3 of this report

is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switchgear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers”.

6.3. ESB (Electronic Communications Networks) Act 2014

- Section 4(1) states:

o *“...any line which is used solely or amongst other things for carrying electricity for any purpose and as including –*

(a) any support for any such line, that is to say, any structure, pole or other thing in, on, by or from which any such line may be supported, carried or suspended,

(b) any apparatus connected to or associated with any such line for the purpose of carrying electricity or electronic communications services, whether such apparatus is owned by the Board or by any company referred to in section 2 or by a company which has been provided access or services referred to in section 3, or

(c) any wire, cable, tube, pipe or similar thing (including its casing or coating) which is used for the purpose of carrying electricity or electronic communications services and which surrounds or supports or is surrounded or supported by, or is installed in close proximity to, or is supported, carried or suspended in association with, any such line.”

7.0 Consultation Meeting

7.1. One (1) no. pre-application consultation meeting was held with the prospective applicant on the 1st October 2025. The meeting record relating to this development proposal and the presentation made by the Applicant to the Commission's representatives are attached to the file.

8.0 Assessment

8.1.1. As noted in Section 6 above, the definition of 'strategic infrastructure' includes development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, with transmission described 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).

8.2. The proposed development entails the construction of electrical plant in the form of 1 no. substation on the subject site and for the transport of electricity at a high voltage (110kV) via a Loop in/Loop out connection to the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV Overhead line. The proposal also includes the transport of electricity at a high voltage (110kV) via an underground tail fed Grid Connection Route (GCR) linking the proposed substation and Coolnabacky 110kV Substation, all of which are systems that consist of high voltage lines and electric plant used for the conveyance of electricity. For that reason, as set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, as amended, the proposal forms part of the transmission system. It therefore follows that as set out in section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act, an application for approval of the development shall be under section 182B and shall be made to the Commission.

8.3. In conclusion, therefore, I recommend the Commission to issue a determination that the proposed development of a 110kV onsite substation and;

- a. A Loop in/Loop out connection to the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV Overhead line; and,
- b. An underground tail fed Grid Connection Route (GCR) linking the proposed substation and the Coolnabacky 110kV Substation.

falls within the scope of section 182A of the 2000 Act, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Commission.

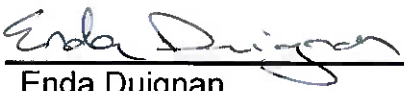
8.4. A list of prescribed bodies is set out in Appendix 1.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. I recommend that Ørsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited be informed that:
- 9.2. The proposed development of an onsite substation and associated electrical plant and a grid connection consisting of:
- a. Loop in/Loop out connection to the Cushaling-Portlaoise 110kV Overhead line within the townland of Morett; and,
 - b. An underground tail fed Grid Connection Route (GCR) to the Coolnabacky 110kV Substation.

as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 11th July 2025 and 19th January 2026 falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should therefore be made directly to the Commission.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.


Enda Duignan
Senior Planning Inspector

29th January 2026

Appendix 1: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Commission:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Laois County Council
- Commission for the Regulation of Utilities
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Uisce Éireann
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- An Taisce
- Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland